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For more information contact:

Derek Perry, communications director

Phone: (469) 278-6223

E-mail: [dperry@aceonline.org](mailto:dperry@aceonline.org)

## **American Coaster Enthusiasts to Celebrate Amusement Park History at 2026 Preservation Conference in the Pacific Northwest**

**GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas, September 4, 2026.** American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE), the world's largest organization dedicated to the appreciation, preservation and enjoyment of roller coasters and amusement parks, will gather in the Pacific Northwest September 4 and 5 for its 2026 Preservation Conference.

The two-day conference will visit two very different but equally significant amusement parks: historic Oaks Park in Portland, Oregon, on Friday, September 4, followed by Wild Waves Theme and Water Park in Federal Way, Washington, on Saturday, September 5.

The conference reflects ACE's longstanding commitment to celebrating the people, parks, rides and traditions that have shaped the amusement industry. This year's event carries particular significance at Wild Waves, which announced that its 2026 season will be its final season, with the park scheduled to close permanently November 1, 2026.

"Preservation is about more than saving a ride or a building. It's about preserving the memories and experiences that these places create for generations of people," said Derek Perry, ACE communications director and president-elect. "*Wild Thing* is a perfect example of that. It was my first upside-down roller coaster when I was a kid, back when it was at Rocky Point in Rhode Island. To see that same coaster preserved and continuing to operate for years at Wild Waves has always meant something special to me. Now, as ACE comes to Wild Waves during its final season, it's a reminder of just how important it is to appreciate these rides while we still can, and to recognize the parks and people who have kept them alive."

*Wild Thing*, an Arrow Dynamics Loop and Corkscrew, originally opened at Rocky Point Park in Warwick, Rhode Island, in 1984. Following Rocky Point's closure, the coaster was relocated across the country to Wild Waves, where it opened as *Wild Thing* in 1997. The ride's history is a remarkable example of an amusement attraction continuing to thrill new generations long after its original home has disappeared.

At Wild Waves, ACE members will have an opportunity to experience the park's collection of attractions during its final operating season, including *Wild Thing* and *Timberhawk: Ride of Prey*, the largest wooden roller coaster in Washington state. For many ACE members, the event will provide an opportunity to experience the park for the first, and potentially last, time.

"ACE is all about supporting amusement parks everywhere. It's bittersweet knowing Wild Waves is closing for good, but our organization is thrilled to show support and celebrate this park one last time on a national level," said Tim Baldwin, ACE events director. "For many attendees, it will be a first-time visit as well. Those coaster fans will be incredibly appreciative of logging rides on *Timberhawk: Ride of Prey* before having to say goodbye. Every wooden coaster is something unique and special, just like a work of art."

The conference will begin Friday at Oaks Park, which has operated continuously since May 30, 1905, making it one of the oldest continually operating amusement parks in the United States. Originally established as a trolley park, Oaks has evolved over more than a century while retaining many of its historic traditions, including its legendary wooden roller skating rink. The park also features modern attractions, including *Adrenaline Peak* and the *Zoooooom Coaster*.

“Oaks Amusement Park is so historic. What a tremendous gift to Portland to have this charming park around for more than a century,” said Baldwin. “The ACE Preservation Conference places an emphasis on parks and attractions that have stood the test of time. This park has things that are very new mixed in with the classics, right down to the skating rink. It is an honor for us to celebrate this Portland experience.”

For Baldwin, the 2026 Preservation Conference also represents a personal milestone, as it will be his final event as ACE events director. His tenure has included the planning and execution of numerous ACE conferences and events, connecting coaster enthusiasts with historic and contemporary amusement parks throughout North America.

The Pacific Northwest conference also provides ACE members with opportunities to explore additional regional attractions. The Washington State Fair and Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver, British Columbia, both feature attractions recognized by ACE as Coaster Classics or ACE Roller Coaster Landmarks. An optional preconference event at Enchanted Forest in Salem, Oregon, will take place September 3. ACE Northwest will also host a postconference event at the Washington State Fair on September 6, featuring rides on the historic *Classic Coaster* and a presentation by longtime fair historian Patty Herman.

“Events like the Preservation Conference are a reminder that amusement parks are living history,” Perry said. “A coaster can be steel, wood, track and trains, but what makes it special are the stories attached to it, the first rides, the family traditions, the friendships and the memories. ACE is proud to celebrate those stories and to help ensure that the history of these places is remembered.”

#### About American Coaster Enthusiasts

American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the appreciation, knowledge and preservation of roller coasters. Founded in 1978, ACE has thousands of members worldwide and works with parks, manufacturers and preservation organizations to celebrate roller coaster history and promote the enjoyment of these iconic attractions.