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A new home for The Rock?

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Apr. 25--PORTSMOUTH -- It looks like Kentucky is finally going to get The Rock.

In an agreed order filed with the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Kentucky Thursday, the case of Kentucky against Steve Shaffer has been put on hold as the parties resolve a single remaining conflict.

"The parties state that one issue remains, specifically, the means by which to remove the Indian Head Rock from the truck once it arrives in Kentucky," the order states.

For the past three years the rock, that gets its name from the carving of an alleged Indian on its face, has resided in the Portsmouth Municipal Garage.

That came after it was pulled out of the Ohio River by Shaffer and other divers in the late summer of 2007.

Shaffer, an Ironton historian, had learned about the rock as a young boy reading about Ohio history.

Its story about how people could walk out to it when the river level dropped dramatically always intrigued him. A few years ago, he started a long-term search and recovery of the artifact.

However, after he located the rock, which had not been seen since the early 1920s, Kentucky cried foul, claiming he had taken an archaeological artifact unlawfully out of the river.

Kentucky owns the sections of the Ohio River that touch its boundaries.

That led to a Greenup County Grand Jury indictment of Shaffer on criminal charges and later a civil suit between Shaffer and the city of Portsmouth and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The criminal matter was resolved in August of 2009, when the charges were dismissed after Kentucky said it could not be proved the object retrieved from the river was the actual historic rock.

However, the civil suit was to have come to trial on May 11 in the courtroom of U.S. District Judge Henry R. Wilhoit Jr. But both parties have apparently agreed that Kentucky will get the rock.

"Although this Court is reluctant to prolong this matter further, it will stay all proceedings herein for sixty days to allow the parties to resolve the remaining transport issue," the order states. "The parties are admonished, however, that as this matter has been pending for quite some time, no further extensions will be granted."

For the past two years Shaffer has been at the center of The Rock case as the fight between Kentucky and Ohio attracted national media attention including a segment on the CBS Evening News and a feature story in the New York Times.

"I am sure the Commonwealth of Kentucky will want to protect the rock in the same fashion Portsmouth was required to by the Corps of Engineer," Shaffer said.