

Society of Systematic Biologists

Society homepage: systematicbiology.org
Journal homepage: sysbio.oxfordjournals.org

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September 1, 2009

Dr. John Holdren, Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street Room 5228
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Dr. Holdren:

On behalf of the **Society of Systematic Biologists**, I write to express strong support for the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) proposed Executive Order for issuance by President Obama to promote the preservation and use of scientific collections.

Our nation's natural science collections, whether at the Smithsonian Institution, an independent or university-affiliated natural history museum, or a science department at a small liberal arts college, are irreplaceable resources that enable us to understand the world in which we live. These specimen and data collections not only help us understand the biological and physical history of earth, they also are essential to our ability to understand how earth systems function today and how they may function in an ever changing world.

The Society of Systematic Biologists serves the community of students and scientists concerned with the study of biological diversity and its origins. We publish the highly regarded scientific journal *Systematic Biology*, sponsor annual meetings, and offer competitive awards for students and professionals. Our science focuses on understanding evolutionary relationships among organisms, species, higher taxa, or other biological entities, such as genes, and the evolution of individual traits, ecological interactions, and geographic distributions. The objective of the Society of Systematic Biologists is the advancement of the science of systematic biology in all its aspects of theory, principles, methodology, and practice, for both living and fossil organisms.

The proposed Executive Order sends a strong message to the natural science collections research and education community. In short, it would demonstrate that the Obama Administration is aware of the important role our institutions play in the nation's scientific research and education enterprise. Moreover, it would demonstrate that federal support and use of data from scientific collections has been hindered by inadequate coordination of planning and budgets. The Executive Order would establish a formal mechanism by which federal agencies could ensure wise and strategic investments in this important and irreplaceable part of our research infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

John Huelsenbeck, President
Society of Systematic Biologists