



August 24, 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:

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) strongly encourages President Obama to issue an Executive Order for the preservation and use of science collections. We fully endorse the model Executive Order recently sent to you by the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

The proposed Executive Order would build on the work initiated by the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections and would better enable federal agencies to not only improve access to government collections. Importantly, the proposed Executive Order would also provide that appropriate actions could be taken to improve access to science collections held by universities, state and local governments, and free-standing museums and research centers.

AIBS is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) scientific association dedicated to advancing biological research and education for the welfare of society. Founded in 1947 as a part of the National Academy of Sciences, AIBS became an independent, member-governed organization in the 1950s. AIBS is sustained by a robust individual and institutional membership. Collectively, our nearly 200 member organizations represent approximately 250,000 scientists and educators. AIBS advances its mission through coalition activities in research, education, and public policy; publishing the peer-reviewed journal *BioScience* and the education website ActionBioscience.org; providing scientific peer review and advisory services to government agencies and other clients; convening meetings; and managing scientific programs.

For years, biological and environmental scientists have expressed concern about policies and practices that have led to reduced funding and staffing for the nation's scientific collections. Unfortunately, this reduction in support has occurred when new technology offers the potential to dramatically increase our access to and use of natural science collections specimens and data.

Natural science collections are valuable national assets and are worthy of a national commitment. In addition to informing our understanding of the history of life on earth, science collections can help inform our understanding of and response to many of our most pressing global problems, such as climate change, emerging diseases, and conservation of biological diversity. Thus, AIBS encourages the President to seize the current opportunity to build on the good work and momentum of the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections by promulgating an Executive Order on science collections such as the one proposed by the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If AIBS may be of assistance to you on this or other science policy matters, please do not hesitate to contact me or AIBS director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500.

Sincerely,

Richard T. O'Grady, Ph.D.
Executive Director