



The Ecological Society of America

1990 M Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

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

August 31, 2009

Dear Dr. Holdren:

As President of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), I write today to request that President Obama issue an Executive Order for the preservation and use of the nation's science collections. ESA supports the Executive Order proposed earlier this summer by the Natural Science Collections Alliance. Drawing on recommendations of the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections, the proposed Executive Order would serve to maintain and improve access to the nation's vast science collection.

As the largest professional organization of ecological scientists, ESA is keenly aware of the critical role these collections of objects—ranging from flora and fauna to moonrocks—play in the nation's research infrastructure. A recent example was the Smithsonian's rare bird collection which allowed identification of the origins of the geese that struck the U.S. Airways plane forced to land in the Hudson River.

As many in our community have noted over the years, the country's science collections are suffering from neglect. Fewer than seven percent are digitized, limiting their potential as an online clearinghouse. Our nation's scientific collections constitute a veritable treasure trove of resources that, as you have noted, can "improve practical understanding of how our world works." Building on the recent efforts of the Interagency Working Group, we believe a logical next step would be an Executive Order highlighting the strengths of these collections and laying out a vision to ensure their survival and enhance their accessibility to the research community and the public.

We appreciate the Administration's consideration of this request. ESA's 10,000 members stand ready to assist your Office with this and other science and environmental policy issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us through the Society's Director of Public Affairs, Nadine Lymn (Nadine@esa.org; 202.833.8773, ext. 205).

Sincerely,

Mary E. Power
President