



NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS ALLIANCE

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March 15, 2010

The Honorable Daniel Lipinski
1717 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance), I commend and thank you for your efforts to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act and for the Subcommittee's recent hearings on the needs of our nation's research infrastructure. As your deliberations continue, we request that the Subcommittee include the nation's natural science collections in the legislation reauthorizing the America COMPETES Act.

Natural science collections are an essential component of the nation's research and science education infrastructure. These collections consist of physical specimens and associated data that are preserved, catalogued, and managed by government agencies, universities, and other organizations. Natural science collections have been built through the collective work of generations of scientists and are irreplaceable records of earth history. In addition to contributing to fundamental research in all areas of science, natural science collections inform our understanding of and response to current problems, such as invasive species, earth systems response to climate change, or biodiversity discovery and conservation.

For many years, members of the scientific collections community have warned that a renewed national focus on the nation's scientific collections is needed. This concern was recognized by the Office of Science and Technology Policy several years ago when it chartered the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections (IWGSC). This panel characterized the status and needs of federal agency collections. Unfortunately, the IWGSC failed to fully consider the needs of non-federal collections.

Because the IWGSC incompletely considered the needs of non-federal collections, and because of the value in assignment of priority by the Administration as a whole, NSC Alliance and other scientific societies and organizations have asked President Obama to promulgate an executive order to promote the preservation and use of scientific collections. The proposed order and cover letter (attached) would establish a persistent and formalized federal structure to consider the needs of federal and non-federal science collections. To date, however, the proposed executive order has not been issued, and the NSC Alliance encourages the Subcommittee to include the

text of the order in your legislation, revised as appropriate to reflect Congressional authorship and to include an authorization for appropriations. The text of the proposed order, as you may note, establishes a process on advance planning and programs for scientific collections, but is not regulatory. We are unaware of any agency or organization that is opposed to what the order would promulgate. The lack of action, we believe, is simply due to differing priorities.

NSC Alliance is a nonprofit association that supports natural science collections, their human resources, the institutions that house them, and their research activities for the benefit of science and society. Our members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. A list of our members is attached.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and for your efforts on behalf of our nation's scientific enterprise. I will be in Washington, DC, on April 6 and 9 and would welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues with you or your staff in greater detail. Please feel free to contact me at wbrown@whrc.org or 508-540-9900 x 143 or NSC Alliance Director of Public Policy Dr. Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org or 202-628-1500 x 250

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W-Y-B' with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Y. Brown
President, NSC Alliance, and
President & CEO, Woods Hole Research Center