

**NSC Alliance Washington Report
March 1, 2010**

In this issue:

- **Universities Need Funds for Research Infrastructure**
- **Some States, Localities Consider Taxing Nonprofit Institutions**
- **Survey Suggests Recession Has Spurred Increased Museum Attendance**
- **FWS Requests Comments on Fish and Wildlife Import/Export Permits**
- **NSF Seeks Public Input on Grant Proposal Guidelines**
- **New Online Group Facilitates Networking for Collection Professionals**
- **New AIBS Report Helps Scientists Follow the Money**

Policy News from NSC Alliance

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at rgropp@aibs.org

Universities Need Funds for Research Infrastructure

A growing backlog of renovation projects at U.S. universities could be hampering American innovation and international competitiveness, according to witnesses at a recent House Science and Technology Subcommittee on Research and Science Education hearing.

On 23 February 2010, Subcommittee Chairman Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) addressed the need for federal support for renovation and maintenance of academic research facilities. “Successful R&D [research and development] takes more than intellectual freedom and grant funding. You also need state-of-the-art lab space, networks, instruments, and computing facilities. Public institutions especially are suffering as the recession has eroded state support. I am worried that unless we actively modernize our R&D facilities, we could not only be spending federal research dollars inefficiently, but we could lose our position as scientific leaders,” said Lipinski.

Witnesses representing research universities from across the nation reported on declining funds to maintain, repair, and renovate science facilities on their campuses. At three universities, Penn State, University of Arizona, and Medical University of South Carolina, the shortfall is \$1.3 billion. Nationally, the backlog is estimated to be \$3.5 billion, according to the National Science Foundation’s 2005 “Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities.” State budget cuts, a lack of philanthropic contributions, and flat or declining federal investments have all contributed to the backlog.

As Dr. Leslie Tolbert, Vice President for Research, Graduate Studies and Economic Development at the University of Arizona, testified, older buildings and outdated equipment stifles research. “Our older buildings do not meet current safety codes, limiting their utility for

research involving hazardous biological or chemical agents. With their small, compartmentalized spaces, they certainly are not conducive to current modes of collaborative research. We struggle to find the resources to update those buildings, as well as to build new research buildings that can provide the new lab space that we need.”

Other witnesses also reflected this sentiment, stating that their institutions attract more competitive and better qualified faculty and students in the scientific disciplines that are housed in new research facilities on their campus. Some universities are also losing experienced foreign-born faculty, who prefer to return to their native country after teaching in the United States for decades because of booming R&D investments abroad.

The hearing was held in preparation for the House Science and Technology Committee’s reauthorization of the America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act.

Some States, Localities Consider Taxing Nonprofit Institutions

As reported in a 27 February 2010 New York Times article, negative economic conditions and dwindling tax revenues continue to place significant burdens on state and local jurisdictions in all regions of the country. In response, officials in some particularly strained areas are considering levying charges or taxes on non-profit organizations. Among the targets are larger-budgeted organizations, such as universities and healthcare systems, but in some cases officials are considering policy changes that would have non-profits pay excise taxes or make payments for essential community services.

The *New York Times* article is available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/28charity.html>

Survey Suggests Recession Has Spurred Increased Museum Attendance

The American Association of Museums (AAM) has released a new report, *Service Despite Stress*. This report was based on a January 2010 survey of AAM members. In brief, the survey found that a majority of museums reported an increase in attendance last year, in many cases despite a decline in funding. This finding supports the conclusions in a 2008 NSC Alliance survey of science collections.

To view the NSC Alliance survey results, published in the *CLS Journal of Museum Studies*, please go to <http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/economic-survey-article.pdf>

To view the AAM report, please go to <http://www.aam-us.org/upload/Service-Despite-Stress.pdf>.

FWS Requests Comments on Fish and Wildlife Import/Export Permits

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) requests public comments regarding the agency's application and reporting requirements for the importation and exportation of fish and wildlife products.

Two permits issued by the FWS that regulate the international trade of wildlife, FWS Form 3-200-2 and Form 3-200-3, are scheduled for government review this year. Of potential interest to natural history collection caretakers is FWS Form 3-200-2, which allows permit holders to import or export wildlife or wildlife products at a nondesignated port if the wildlife or wildlife products will be used as scientific specimens. Form 3-200-3 regulates the commercial trade of wildlife and wildlife products.

The FWS seeks comments about the necessity of the collection of information, ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected, and ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents.

Comments must be submitted by 26 April 2010. For more information, please visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-3888.htm>.

NSF Seeks Public Input on Grant Proposal Guidelines

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is seeking public comments regarding their grant proposal guidelines. Comments on ways to enhance the quality and utility of information collected or ways to reduce the burden on grant applicants are being accepted until 27 April 2010. For more information, please visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-4000.htm>.

New Online Group Facilitates Networking for Collection Professionals

A new online group has formed to encourage networking among natural science collections leaders. The group offers an opportunity for leaders from collections across the nation to identify and discuss common public policy issues, and other common challenges facing natural science collections professionals.

To join this group you must join LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). There is no cost for creating a profile on this site. Once you have registered, simply search the Groups function for "Natural Science Collections Leadership." Membership in this group is limited to natural science collections professionals, but there is no cost to join or participate. Please contact Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org if you have any questions.

New AIBS Report Helps Scientists Follow the Money

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) Public Policy Office has produced a new report, *The President's FY 2011 Budget for Biological Sciences Research*. This document helps scientists understand the President's fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget request. The short report provides an overview and initial analysis of proposed federal investments in ten science agencies, including the Smithsonian Institution.

A PDF of this report is available at

http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/resources/AIBS_Budget_Report_FY_2011.pdf

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance 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. Website: www.NSCAlliance.org

Note: You are receiving a copy of this electronic report as part of your membership in the NSC Alliance. Contact the Alliance office with any email address or member representative name changes send an email to spotter@aibs.org.