

NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 3, Issue 4, March 15, 2012

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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.

NSC Alliance to Host Congressional Science Briefing on Digitization

On 5 June 2012, the NSC Alliance will host a science briefing for policymakers on "Digitizing Science Collections: Unlocking Data for Research and Innovation." The event will provide congressional, federal, and nongovernmental decision makers with information about the value of scientific collections and efforts to make collections more accessible through digitization.

Draft Program

Natural science collections are research infrastructure that house irreplaceable specimens and associated data. New technologies and techniques make it possible to move this information from the shelves of a science collection to a computer in a research laboratory, classroom, or home. This briefing will explore how scientists and natural science collections managers are working to digitize the nation's natural science collections to press forward the frontiers of research, spur new technology, and provide information to answer pressing societal problems.

Speakers:

Dr. Mary Liz Jameson
Associate Professor, Wichita State University
The Value of Biological Collections to Science, Education, and the Economy

Dr. Larry Page
President, Natural Science Collections Alliance
Curator of Fishes, Florida Museum of Natural History
Digitization: A Modern Method for Exponentially Increasing Access to Collections

Dr. Michael A. Mares
Director, Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History and Presidential Professor of
Zoology, University of Oklahoma
Securing the Long-term Sustainability of Natural Science Collections and Data
Date: Tuesday, 5 June 2012

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Location: 2325 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC
For more information, please contact Dr. Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org.

Register for the Specimen Digitization Tools and Practices Workshop at Botany 2012

iDigBio, the National Science Foundation funded National Resource for Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections, is organizing a workshop on specimen digitization to be held on 12 July 2012. The workshop will occur the day after the Botany 2012 conference. The workshop is designed to introduce current and future biological and paleontological specimen collections staff to resources and workflows that can lead to greater efficiencies in the digitization of their collections.

Up to 25 participants will be supported by reimbursement of up to \$500 to attend the workshop. Those interested in attending should describe three things in an email: (1) the status of digitization of biological or paleontological specimens at your institution (including total number of specimens and percent databased, imaged, and georeferenced), (2) your role in digitization of biological or paleontological specimens at your institution, and (3) your degree of interest in presenting a short talk (5-10 minutes) on your experiences with digitization. It is not necessary for every participant to present a talk, nor is it necessary for all participants to be currently employed as staff at a biological or paleontological specimen collection. Graduate students are particularly encouraged to apply, but a clear connection should be made in the email between your career objectives and the topic of the workshop. If you are interested in presenting a short talk, please specify the topic of your presentation in less than 200 words in the email. Topics could include particularly efficient digitization workflows, ad hoc solutions to digitization bottlenecks, lessons from digitization coordination across multiple institutions, etc. Further directions regarding reimbursement will be sent to the successful applicants in late March.

Send the email to Cathy Bester via the form at https://www.idigbio.org/contact/Cathy_Bester by 19 March. Notification of selection by the committee will be made by 23 March.

iDigBio has also organized a symposium entitled “Building a High-Resolution, Specimen-Based Picture of Life: Possibilities and Challenges” for the Botany 2012 conference. It will be held on the afternoon of Wednesday, 11 July. More details on the symposium will appear later on the

conference website (<http://www.2012.botanyconference.org/>).

Science Organizations Sponsor Congressional Briefing on Economic Returns from Federal Investments in R&D

Ten scientific organizations have joined together to sponsor a briefing for congressional policymakers on the economic returns associated with Federal government funding for scientific research.

The briefing, “Research That Pays Off: The Economic Benefits of Federally Funded R&D” will be held on Friday, March 16, 2012. Two sessions have been planned. The first session is planned for 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. and will be held in the House Natural Resources Committee Hearing Room, Longworth House Office Building 1324. The briefing will be repeated at noon in the Congressional Visitors Center, SVC 209-209 (Colorado Senator Mark Udall is the honorary co-host).

Background:

In a 1988 national address, President Reagan asked Congress to increase spending on research, calling it “an indispensable investment in America’s future.” President Obama has said science is “essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, and our environment.” But the federal share of research spending is now half of what it was in the 1950s. With China’s investment in state-funded R&D on track to eclipse that of the U.S. in coming decades, our global status as number one in science is at risk. What consequences will this have for our long-term economic productivity and the future of American industry? In this briefing, an engaging panel will discuss the critical contributions that federal R&D have made to American industry in recent decades, how federally-funded R&D could continue to return dividends, and what effect this investment could have on long term economic prosperity. It turns out that many of the great economic engines of recent times had their start as federally funded initiatives.

Program

Moderator

- Vijay Vaitheeswaran, Correspondent, The Economist

Panelists

- Dr. Fred Block, Research Professor of Sociology, University of California at Davis
- Dr. Katie Hunt, R&D Director, Innovation Sourcing & Sustainable Technologies, The Dow Chemical Company
- Simon Tripp, Senior Director, Technology Partnership Practice, Battelle Memorial Institute

Space is limited and an RSVP is required.

For 9:30 a.m. in Longworth, please RSVP to <http://tinyurl.com/SciBrf-930amRDEconBenf>.

For Noon in SVC, please RSVP to
<http://tinyurl.com/SciBrf-12pmRDEconBenf>.

Sponsoring organizations:

- American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
- American Chemical Society (ACS)
- American Geological Institute (AGI)
- American Geophysical Union (AGU)
- American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS)
- American Society of Mechanical engineers (ASME)
- American Sociological Association (ASA)
- American Statistical Association (ASA)
- Geological Society of America (GSA)
- University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR)

Report Analyzes R&D in the President's FY 2013 Budget Request

An analysis prepared by the American Institute of Biological Sciences of President Obama's fiscal year 2013 budget request for biological sciences research and education has been updated. The report now includes information on the proposed spending plans for the National Institutes of Health and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The budget proposal for the National Science Foundation and several other federal agencies are also included. Download the updated report at http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/resources/AIBS_Budget_Report_FY_2013.pdf.

Opportunity for Public Input on NAGPRA Information Collection

The National Park Service is seeking public comments regarding the collection of information from museums about Native American cultural items in their collections. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requires museums to compile certain information regarding Native American cultural items in their possession or control, and provide that information to lineal descendants and the National NAGPRA Program to support repatriation.

Museums are required to submit summaries of their Native American collection and inventories of human remains and their funerary objects.

Comments are currently being accepted on whether or not the information collection is necessary; ways to enhance the quality and utility of the information to be collected; and ways to minimize the burden to respondents.

Comments are due by 1 May 2012. More information is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-03-02/html/2012-5128.htm>.

NSF BIO Responds to Community Concerns about Collections Care

On 5 March 2012, Dr. John Wingfield, head of the Biological Sciences Directorate at the National Science Foundation, responded to concerns raised by the collections community about the Collections in Support of Biological Research (CSBR) program. NSC Alliance and several other scientific organizations wrote to Wingfield in late February regarding NSF's proposal to change the CSBR program from an annual to biennial competition (see <http://nscalliance.org/?p=454>).

The core content of the letter of response received by NSC Alliance follows:

The Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) appreciates your interest in its ongoing activities and programs, and especially your support for the new biodiversity programs launched in the last two years, namely, Dimensions of Biodiversity (DoB) and the Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections (ADBC). These programs are being supported at an annual level of nearly \$30 million (combined) and represent a significant investment by the Biology Directorate in biodiversity research. As you know, Advancing the Tree of Life (AToL), which began in fiscal year 2003, was originally intended as a ten-year program (ending in 2012). However, instead of ending the program, BIO used 2012 AToL funds to support the Assembling, Visualizing and Analyzing the Tree of Life (AVAVToL) Ideas Lab (part of the AToL program). The AVAVToL projects are expected to result in outcomes that can be used to creatively revision the AToL program in a way that will set the stage for the future of systematics, taxonomy and related fields. Consequently, the next AToL competition will be in FY2014 with its focus guided by the early results of the AVAVToL projects.

As we are all well aware, challenging financial times often translate into challenging funding priorities that require hard decisions. Nonetheless, BIO strives to sustain support for its disciplinary programs since they are the foundation of the biological sciences and the source of some of its most innovative and transformative discoveries. Where other Directorates have eliminated programs, BIO has chosen both to support new priorities (such as DoB, ADBC and AVAVToL) and to preserve core disciplinary programs. It has done this by staggering and/or reducing but not eliminating some non-core competitions, such as Collections in Support of Biological Research (CSBR). Creative management of BIO's resources will help insure that the biological research supported by the NSF remains strong, vibrant and always at the leading edge.

Upcoming Training Sessions from the National NAGPRA Program

Determining Cultural Affiliation

Review the tools and best practices for determining cultural affiliation as part of the requirements of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Each Federal agency and museum with control over Native American human remains must identify cultural affiliation if it can do so on the basis of reasonable belief. Discuss NAGPRA requirements, definitions of critical terminology, grant assistance, and the consultation and review process.

Date: Apr 25, 2012
Location: Denver, CO

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

NAGPRA: Databases, Summaries, Inventories, and Notices

Review the summaries and inventories requirements for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Each Federal agency and museum with control over Native American human remains and cultural items must complete and submit a Summary and/or Inventory to Indian tribes/Native Hawaiian organizations and the National NAGPRA Program. These documents are the basis for writing a Federal Register notice, allowing for repatriation or other disposition. Discuss NAGPRA requirements and ongoing responsibilities under the Future Applicability rule (43 CFR 10.13) for Summaries and Inventories. Compliance documentation (inventories and summary information) is available in the form of online databases created by the National NAGPRA Program. Using these databases, learn how to identify Indian tribes for consultations, evaluate the data supplied by museums and Federal agencies, and explore ways the data can be utilized to further NAGPRA compliance.

Date: April 24, 2012
Location: Denver, CO

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

NAGPRA: Writing and Managing a Successful Grant

The National NAGPRA Program offers grants to assist museums, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations with the implementation of NAGPRA. The NAGPRA process may include consultation, documentation, and repatriation or other disposition of human remains and cultural items. Learn how to assess the needs of a NAGPRA program, identify fundable projects, and write and manage a successful grant. Review case studies of grant applications and projects.

Date: TBD
Location: TBD

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

NAGPRA Basics Training

NAGPRA Basics training covers the background of NAGPRA, the consultation and decision making process, notices, grants, and civil penalties. Both new and veteran NAGPRA practitioners have found this training to be helpful in their work.

Date: May 8, 2012
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico
Cost: Free

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative Selects Chief Science Officer

On Friday, February 24, 2012, the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) Research Board announced the selection of Dr. Charles “Chuck” A. Wilson to serve as the GoMRI Chief Science Officer.

The Chief Science Officer is a new position created by the Research Board to provide scientific and research advice and leadership to the GoMRI. Dr. Wilson will coordinate the work of the GoMRI Research Board with the various administrative units implementing the research program and with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. Additionally, he will support the Research Board’s efforts to ensure the intellectual quality, research effectiveness, and scientific independence of the \$500 million GoMRI research initiative.

Dr. Wilson is a distinguished scientist and academic leader. He has held faculty and administrative posts at Louisiana State University (LSU), where he joined the faculty in 1984 as an assistant professor in the Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences. Since then, he has risen through the academic ranks to full professor and department chairman. Most recently, he has served as Executive Director of the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, and prior to that as the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. During his tenure at LSU, Dr. Wilson has received more than \$15,000,000 in private, state, and federal funding for research and education programs, and has authored or co-authored more than 100 scientific publications.

Dr. Wilson’s leadership goes well beyond the academic setting. He has distinguished himself through service in scientific organizations and on scientific advisory bodies, including the GoMRI Research Board.

The GoMRI Research Board is an independent body that administers BP’s ten-year, \$500 million commitment to independent research into the effects of the Deepwater Horizon incident.

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.