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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 Asks Congress to Invest in Science

NSC Alliance has provided testimony to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies. More specifically, NSC Alliance urged Congress to provide the National Science Foundation (NSF) with at least \$7.373 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2013. If funded at this level, the Foundation would receive an approximate 4.8 percent increase over the current funding level.

The testimony highlighted the contributions of NSF's biological and geosciences research programs to science, education, and research infrastructure. In addition to supporting the proposed funding increase for research in the Biological Sciences (BIO) directorate, the NSC Alliance urged Congress to support the \$10 million requested for digitization of biological collections and to restore funding for the Collections in Support of Biological Research program.

Read the NSC Alliance's testimony to the Senate at http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/nsca_nsf_senate_fy13_testimony.pdf. The testimony to the House of Representatives is available at http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/nsca_nsf_house_fy13_testimony.pdf.

Action Alert: Write to Congress about Science

Congress has started the process for determining fiscal year 2013 funding levels for federal programs. This process directly impacts the various agencies that support research, such as the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, and the Departments of Energy, Commerce, and Agriculture. This process will also determine how much funding is available to support important in-house government research, such as that conducted by the various Department of the Interior bureaus (e.g. USGS, NPS, USFWS, BLM).

It is important that members of Congress are reminded by constituents of the importance of sustained federal investment in our nation's scientific research enterprise. In just a few minutes, you can send a prepared letter to your Representative and Senators to urge his/her support for [NSF](#) or [USGS](#). Alternatively, you can craft a [letter of your own](#) about these or other federal research programs.

Details about the President's budget request to Congress for scientific research at various federal agencies is available from AIBS (http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/resources/AIBS_Budget_Report_FY_2013.pdf).

Visit the AIBS Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/aibs/home/> to take action.

NSC Alliance Asks House to Support Proposed Funding for Interior Collections

On 27 March 2012, the NSC Alliance submitted testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. The testimony supported \$3.5 million in new funding for the Department of the Interior's Cultural and Scientific Collections program.

The FY 2013 budget request would implement a multi-year action plan to address recommendations made by the Department's Inspector General regarding Interior's accountability for its cultural and scientific specimens. Interior is an important caretaker of museum collections; the Department has an estimated 146 million items, which is second in size only to the Smithsonian Institution.

Download a copy of NSC Alliance's testimony at http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/nsca_owt_interior_house_fy13.pdf.

Senate-Passed Transportation Bill Cuts Funding for Archeological Research, Environmental Projects

Federal support for archeological research and wildlife protection could be cut if legislation approved by the U.S. Senate becomes law. A bill to reauthorize the federal highway trust fund includes major changes for a little known program that supports aesthetic and environmental improvements to transportation infrastructure projects.

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (S. 1813) would restructure and reduce spending for so-called transportation enhancements. These projects include construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, highway beautification, mitigation of pollution from roadways, construction of wildlife corridors, historic preservation, archaeological research, and transportation museums.

The bill passed by the Senate on 14 March would consolidate the transportation enhancements program with several others and cap funding at a lower level. The current highway funding system dedicates 10 percent of certain federal transportation funds for enhancement projects – this is roughly 1.5 percent of overall federal aid for the highway program. Most of these resources have been used for pedestrian enhancements, such as sidewalks and bike trails.

The Senate bill would also eliminate transportation museums from eligibility for funding through the highway trust fund. Additionally, states would no longer be required to spend federal funds on transportation enhancement projects.

The current federal highway authorization expires at the end of June. The House of Representatives has thus far been unable to agree on a reauthorization bill. Some Senators are pushing for the House to take up S. 1813.

Video of Congressional Briefing on Economic Returns from Federal Investments in R&D Now Online

A recording of a Congressional briefing on the economic returns associated with federal government funding for scientific research is now available online.

The briefing, “Research That Pays Off: The Economic Benefits of Federally Funded R&D” was held on 16 March 2012.

A video of the briefing is available online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m6y_P2vUfg&feature=youtu.be.

Graduate Student Opportunity: Science Policy Internship

The American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) and American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) are pleased to announce the availability of an internship in the Washington, DC, AIBS Public Policy Office. The internship is open to ASM members who are currently enrolled in a graduate program or who have completed a program within a semester of application, and who are engaged in research that will contribute to the understanding and conservation of mammals. The internship is for three months during fall 2012, and carries a generous monthly stipend. Selection criteria include demonstrated interest in the public policy process, strong communications skills, and excellent academic record. For details and requirements, please visit http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html.

NEON Seeks Assistant Director for Scientific Research Collections and Analysis

The National Ecological Observatory Network, Inc. (NEON) is hiring an assistant director for scientific research collections. This position will be responsible for planning, implementing, and overseeing the archiving and analysis of samples (biological, physical and chemical), tissues, and specimens collected as part of the field-based research of the NEON Observatory. This person will actively collaborate with NEON scientists to determine, document, and establish archiving and analytical needs and spearhead outsourcing of archiving and analyses to existing facilities.

NEON is a \$430 million dollar observatory project dedicated to understanding how changes in climate, land use and invasive species impact ecology. For the next three decades NEON will collect a comprehensive range of ecological data on a continental scale across 20 eco-climatic domains representing U.S. ecosystems.

For more information about this job opening, visit <http://www.neoninc.org/jobs/assistantdirectorcollections>.

USGS Coalition Testifies Before House Subcommittee

On 21 March 2012, NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp testified before the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee about the President's fiscal year 2013 budget request for the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Gropp provided testimony on behalf of the USGS Coalition, an organization he currently chairs. The NSC Alliance is a member of the Coalition.

The USGS Coalition is an alliance of more than 70 organizations united by a commitment to the continued vitality of the USGS and its ability to provide critical data and services to the nation. The Coalition supports increased federal investment in USGS programs that underpin responsible natural resource stewardship, improve resilience to natural and human-induced hazards, and contribute to the long-term health, security, and prosperity of the nation.

For more information about the USGS Coalition, please visit www.usgscoalition.org. If your organization is interested in becoming a member of the USGS Coalition, please visit <http://www.usgscoalition.org/?q=node/2>.

Pliocene Climate Data Used to Predict Future Trends

A new study published online 18 March 2012 in *Nature Climate Change* uses data about the Pliocene epoch to test how accurately climate models can predict future climate trends. The Pliocene epoch is the time period from 3.3 to 3.0 million years ago, and is believed to resemble most closely, in terms of "sustained global warmth," what is predicted for the 21st century.

The Pliocene data used in the report describe sea surface temperatures, and are “newly characterized in terms of level of confidence.” Analyzing fossils from sediments that date to this time period, researchers were able to assess the veracity of temperature estimates. These temperature datasets were then used to evaluate four existing climate model simulations. “The litmus test of whether a climate model has any predictive power to tell us what future conditions might be on planet Earth in response to both natural and human climate drivers is the ability of that model to accurately predict past climate conditions as preserved in the geologic record,” says Marcia McNutt, director of the United States Geological Survey (USGS).

The researchers found that these four climate models were consistent with each other, and in agreement with the Pliocene data, with the exception of the North Atlantic region. This may be due to the complexity of the factors that affect the North Atlantic climate, including ocean circulation and atmospheric gases. Overall, this study “may provide a new perspective and insight into the predictive abilities of these models in simulating a past warm interval in Earth history.” The remaining ten general circulation models will be examined with the Pliocene data later this year.

The current work represents an international collaborative effort of the USGS with Columbia University, National Center for Atmospheric Research, University of Tokyo, Japan Agency for Marine–Earth Science and Technology, University of Leeds, British Geological Survey, and University of Bristol.

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.