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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.

For Membership Review: Proposed NSC Alliance Board Slate

Additional nominations are being accepted until 15 August 2011.

Annual NSC Alliance Board elections are getting underway, as per the NSC Alliance Bylaws (http://nscalliance.org/?page_id=16), which state:

“The Nominating Committee shall furnish the names of nominees to the Secretary, who shall circulate them either in written or electronic form (e.g., web site) to the members at least thirty (30) days in advance of the election in order to provide for additional names to be nominated by the membership. Nomination to the ballot from the membership requires written support from 10 members from any category of membership.”

Visit <http://nscalliance.org/?p=390> to view the proposed slate. Additional nominations (with written support from 10 members) may be sent to the Nominating Committee Chair, William Brown, at wvbrown@gmail.com.

Nominations will close on 15 August 2011.

Action Alert: Cutting Science Funding Will Not Solve the Deficit Problem

There appears to be bipartisan agreement that the nation must take corrective steps to reduce the size of the federal deficit. For months now, however, lawmakers have been battling a policy solution. Some politicians have proposed deep cuts or the elimination of some scientific research programs. Using the budget deficit to target scientific research that one finds politically unpopular is not going to solve our complex economic problems. Significantly cutting federal investment in scientific research and education programs will make our current fiscal problems worse.

Remind your members of Congress today that investments in science will help the nation develop the new knowledge that will drive economic development and thus contribute to reducing the federal deficit. Send a letter to your members of Congress today by going to <http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=51791606>.

House Panel Proposes Disproportionate Cuts to USGS Biology, Ecosystems Research

If the House of Representative's Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill were enacted in its current form, \$10.7 million would be cut from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) ecosystem and biological research programs in the coming fiscal year. When the proposed spending cuts are considered with the reductions enacted in the 2011 Continuing Resolution, the budget for USGS Ecosystems activities (which consists largely of the programs previously housed within the Biological Resources Discipline), would decline by 9.3 percent over two years. This is a disproportionate reduction when compared with other USGS programs and with the agency as a whole.

The research and monitoring programs that comprise the Ecosystems account within USGS are vital to the nation. These scientific activities help decision makers within other Interior bureaus, states, local governments, and the private sector to understand the status of our living resources. Much of this information is only collected by the USGS. Without it, our efforts to combat invasive species, manage endangered and threatened species, address wildlife diseases, or restore degraded landscapes would be severely hampered.

The proposed cuts to USGS research include:

- \$4.8 million from wildlife and terrestrial endangered species research
- \$1.0 million from aquatic and endangered resources research
- \$0.2 million from research on invasive species
- \$1.4 million from monitoring of species and habitat status and trends
- \$4.7 million from the Cooperative Research Units (partnerships between universities, states, and USGS to conduct biological research in 38 states)

Terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystem studies would receive an additional \$1.5 million relative to FY 2011.

The House of Representatives will consider the fiscal year 2012 Interior and Environment

Appropriations bill the week of 25 July 2011. Please take a few minutes to contact your Representative to share your concerns about these proposed cuts and to encourage them to oppose spending cuts to biological and ecosystems research at the USGS.

Interested individuals can express their concern about these cuts by sending a letter to their members of Congress at <http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=51503521>.

House Bill Would Cut NSF Budget

On 13 July 2011, the House Appropriations Committee approved a measure that would fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) at \$6.85 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2012. This is the same amount the agency received in FY 2011, but roughly \$900 million less than President Obama requested.

Despite the flat funding for NSF as a whole, Research and Related Activities would receive an additional \$43 million. This increase would come at the expense of Education and Human Resources (\$26 million decrease) and Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (\$17 million decrease). Funding for Agency Operations and Award Management would be unchanged from FY 2011. The smaller budget for construction could jeopardize NSF's plans to fund construction of the National Ecological Observatory Network and the Ocean Observatories Initiative.

The proposed funding level may be a disappointment to some, but others in the scientific community feel grateful that NSF was not subjected to deeper cuts. Funding for the Departments of Commerce and Justice and for related agencies would decline by 3 percent below FY 2008, under the House proposal. "Despite a 6 percent lower allocation than in fiscal year 2011, this bill increases funding for research accounts at [National Institute of Standards and Technology] and NSF," said subcommittee Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA). "Investments in scientific research are critical to long-term economic growth and job creation."

The House of Representatives could debate the legislation in the next few weeks. The Senate has yet to act on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Activities FY 2012 appropriations.

Students Urge Lawmakers to Invest in Science

Nearly 2,800 students pursuing a Ph.D., Master's, or bachelor's degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) have signed a letter to federal lawmakers encouraging sustained investments in the nation's scientific research, education, and training programs.

"Throughout the 20th century, sustained investments in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics helped build our nation's economy and improved quality of life for people around the world," states the letter. "If the United States is to remain a global leader, both economically and scientifically, we must sustain and reinvest in STEM research and development."

"As future scientists and educators, federal funding is important to us all," said Rachel Meyer, one of the co-authors of the letter. "While addressing the nation's budget challenges is essential, now is not the time to sacrifice investments in science." Meyer is a doctoral candidate at the City University of New York, and Student Representative on the Board of Directors for the Botanical Society of America.

The petition was sent to Representatives who serve on the Appropriations Committee prior to the 13 July markup of legislation to fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fiscal year 2012. NSF is a major supporter of basic research at America's universities and colleges. In many fields, such as biology, computer science, mathematics, and the social sciences, NSF is the primary source of federal funding.

"Science is a proven driver of economic growth in the United States," said American Institute of Biological Sciences President Dr. James P. Collins. "Federal support for research and science education is vital for job creation and economic recovery, and for continued advancements in human health, national security, agriculture, energy, and environmental stewardship. The views expressed in this letter are a real credit to the foresight of these thousands of students."

Residents of all 50 states, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, and Guam signed the letter. The students are pursuing degrees across a wide range of scientific disciplines, including biology, geology, chemistry, physics, linguistics, astronomy, math, computer science, and engineering.

The letter is the result of a joint effort between student members of the Botanical Society of America and the American Institute of Biological Sciences.

A copy of the letter is available online at www.aibs.org/public-policy/science_students_letter.html.

Join Natural Science Collections Colleagues on LinkedIn

A new online group has formed to encourage networking among natural science collections leaders. This group offers an opportunity for individuals from collections across the nation to identify and discuss common public policy issues, or other common challenges they face as natural science collections professionals. To join this group you must first join [LinkedIn](#). 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 in group discussions or events.

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.