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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.

Input Sought on Network Integrated Biollections Alliance

With support from the U.S. National Science Foundation, in September 2012 the American Institute of Biological Sciences will convene a two-day workshop in Reston, Virginia, to develop an implementation plan for the Strategic Plan for a Network Integrated Biollections Alliance (NIBA). The outcome of the workshop will be a detailed report that will be published in November.

The workshop organizing committee wants the report to be informed by as many viewpoints as possible. There will be two opportunities for individuals and organizations to inform the recommendations contained in the report. Right now, interested parties are invited to review the Strategic Plan for NIBA at <http://digbiocol.wordpress.com/brochure/>. Then, please share any suggestions or other comments you think could help inform the discussion and outcomes of the September workshop.

The workshop will consider how best to achieve the following objectives.

1. Digitize data from all U.S. biological collections, large and small, and integrate these in a web-accessible interface using shared standards and formats.
2. Develop new web interfaces, visualization and analysis tools, and data-mining and georeferencing processes and make all of the tools available for use in the nation's collections.
3. Enable real-time upgrades of biological data and prevent the future occurrence of non-accessible collection data through the use of tools, training, and infrastructure to ensure digital capture of data from all specimens that are added to collections henceforth.

Of particular interest to the planning committee are suggestions concerning the organization and governance required to achieve these objectives, as well as the technology development, workforce development, and workforce training that will be required to achieve them.

Please email comments to publicpolicy@aibs.org by Friday, 7 September 2012.

Following the workshop, additional community input will be sought on the draft report.

Action Alert: Ask Congress and the President to Prevent Devastating Budget Cuts

Under current law, federal programs face devastating across-the-board budget cuts this January. Unless Congress and the President act now, non-defense discretionary programs, such as the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Department of the Interior, among others face mandatory budget cuts of at least 7.8 in January 2013. Defense and security programs would be cut by 10 percent.

The impact of these cuts could be:

- A loss of about 31,000 jobs in the life, physical, and social sciences, according to a report, “The Economic Impact of the Budget Control Act of 2011 on DOD and non-DOD Agencies,” prepared by Dr. Stephen S. Fuller of George Mason University.
- The National Science Foundation could lose \$538 million, an amount comparable to three-quarters of the budget for the Biological Sciences Directorate. According to ResearchAmerica!, the proposal success rate could drop from 22 percent to 16 percent.
- The National Institutes of Health would likely fund 700 fewer grants as a result of a \$2.4 billion cut, according to a report, “Under Threat: Sequestration’s Impact on Nondefense Jobs and Services,” prepared by Senator Tom Harkin, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies.
- The United States Geological Survey would likely be required to layoff employees, as most of the agency’s budget is spent on personnel.

Please take a few moments now to send a letter (<http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=61710826>) to your members of Congress and the President asking them to do their jobs and prevent budget sequestration.

Encyclopedia of Life Calls for Research Wishes

The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) is pleased to announce the call for research wishes. Individuals are invited to submit longstanding research questions that involve a large number of taxa. EOL users will select the top ten questions, which will receive access to resources from EOL. Research wishes will be accepted through 15 September 2012. For more information, visit <http://eol.org/info/347>.

Public Comments Sought on NAGPRA Reporting Requirements

The National Park Service is currently accepting public input on reporting requirements for museums under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The law requires museums to compile certain information regarding Native American cultural items in their possession.

The government is interested in comments regarding ways to minimize the burden of the information collection on respondents and ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected.

Comments will be accepted through 19 September 2012. More information is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-08-20/html/2012-20361.htm>. If your organization provides comments, please consider sharing a copy with the NSC Alliance. Please send them to Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org.

November Elections Draw Near: Register to Vote

This November, voters will head to the polls to elect the next President, all members of the United States House of Representatives, 33 Senate seats, and various state government offices. To find out more about elections in your district, visit the AIBS Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/aibs/election/home/>.

If you have recently moved, you will need to re-register to vote. To obtain a voter registration form, visit http://aibs.capwiz.com/election/register_vote/.

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.