

## **NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 3, Issue 15, December 13, 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](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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### **NSC Alliance Releases New Resource on Value of Digitization**

The Natural Science Collections Alliance has prepared a short report on digitization of natural history collections. The document outlines the potential uses of digitized data and its value to researchers, students, decision makers, and the public. Examples are presented of how digitized specimens and their associated data are being put to use.

The following is an excerpt from the paper:

Natural history collections contain a wealth of information about the organisms inhabiting our planet. The knowledge produced from collections fundamentally shapes our understanding of the variety of life on Earth, the effects of climate change on species distributions and extinction risk, and the threat posed by invasive species and pathogens, among many other issues. With this information, we can advance and support basic science, economy and trade, public health and safety, agriculture, and national security.

This information, however, is often decentralized, shared among a multitude of institutions located around the world, and retrieving the information can be challenging. This is beginning to change as technological advances revolutionize storage, access, and use of biological collections data.

Download the full document at [http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/nsca\\_digitization.pdf](http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/nsca_digitization.pdf). Read other papers in NSC Alliance's series "On the Importance of Scientific Collections" at [http://nscalliance.org/?page\\_id=10](http://nscalliance.org/?page_id=10).

## House of Representatives Selects New Committee Leadership

The House of Representatives has determined who will lead the chamber's twenty-five committees in the next Congress. Although many chairmen and ranking members will retain their positions, changes are in store for several committees with jurisdiction over science.

Notably, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee will have a new leader next year. Representative Lamar Smith (R-TX) won a three-way race for the spot that will be vacated by Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX), who is facing a term limit as chairman under his party's rules. Smith currently chairs the Judiciary Committee, but is also facing a term limit. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) will serve a second term as the top Democrat on the Science Committee.

Smith has served on the science panel since he was first elected to Congress in 1986. The committee oversees non-defense federal research and development, including the National Science Foundation. "As Chairman of the Science Committee, I will be an advocate for America's innovators by promoting legislation that encourages scientific discoveries, space exploration, and the application of new technologies to expand our economy and create jobs for American workers," said Rep. Smith in a statement. The congressman has been active in patent reform and space policy.

Among the committee leaders who will retain their posts is Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY). Rogers chairs the Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for allocating federal funding on an annual basis. In a statement, Rogers highlighted the committee's efforts to reduce spending by almost \$100 billion during his tenure over the last two years: "I look forward to continuing this important work on behalf of the American people, making the necessary strides to get the nation's finances on track, reducing unnecessary government spending, and investing in important programs that will benefit the nation both now and in the future."

The appropriations panel will have a new ranking member, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY). Lowey faced a tough battle within the Democratic caucus for the position, beating Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-NY) to become the first woman to lead the committee.

Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA) will retain his position as chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over legislation that addresses energy production, management of oceans and public lands, and conservation of fish and wildlife. "By protecting and unlocking access to our public lands and resources, we can keep and create jobs here in America, create new sources of revenue, and protect the livelihoods of millions of Americans," said Hastings. "We'll continue to advance policies that boost offshore and onshore energy production; promote a balanced, multi-use approach to public land management; protect hydropower; expand water storage and supplies; encourage economic growth on tribal lands; protect wildlife and cut government red tape." Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) will also return as the ranking Democrat on the Natural Resources Committee.

Leadership of the Agriculture and Energy and Commerce Committees will stay the same in the new Congress. Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK) will serve a second term as chairman of the

Agriculture Committee; Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN) will stay on as the top Democrat. Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) will continue to chair the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) will continue as Ranking Member.

### **No More Cuts to Research: Join a National Day of Action**

People around the country are taking action to stand up for science. Voice your support for federal investments in research and science education.

The biological sciences community needs to express its opposition to further cuts to the federal programs that invest in research, support education, and protect natural resources. These programs are essential to ensuring America's global competitiveness, growing the economy, and addressing pressing social, public health, and environmental issues.

#### [Take action now!](#)

It's easy to get involved. Send a prewritten letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Call your members of Congress. Send a Tweet to your elected officials.

Under current law, federal programs face devastating across-the-board budget cuts over the next decade. Unless Congress and the President act to prevent further cuts, non-defense discretionary programs, such as the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Department of the Interior, NOAA, and EPA, face mandatory 8.2 percent budget cuts next year, with further cuts over the next decade. Defense, including medical and environmental research supported by the Department of Defense, and security programs would be cut by 9.4 percent in 2013, with additional cuts in the subsequent years.

The net result of sequestration could be the loss of \$12 billion in research funding next year; the loss of 31,000 jobs in the life, physical, and social sciences; and delays in the construction and renovation of facilities for research and environmental conservation.

#### [Please do your part for science and take action.](#)

Need more information? [Watch this three-minute video](#) from AIBS that explains the fiscal cliff and how it is likely to impact science. AIBS has also prepared a [report](#) about the fiscal cliff and budget sequestration.

### **New Paper Highlights the Costs of Collecting and Preparing Specimens**

A recent publication by the Texas Tech University Natural Science Research Laboratory presents methods for determining the costs of collecting and preparing mammal voucher specimens. Such information is useful in justifying budget requests from administrators and in formulating policies on specimen usage and replacement, according to the paper's authors. At Texas Tech University, the average value for a locally collected specimen was \$41 and \$74 for a specimen

collected abroad. Costs did range, however, depending on the location of the trip, number of personnel, and number of specimens collected. The paper can be downloaded for free at <http://www.nslr.ttu.edu/publications/opapers/ops/OP313.pdf>.

## **Graduate Student Leaders Sought to Shape Science Policy**

Applications are now being accepted for the 2013 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award. This award recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences who have demonstrated initiative and leadership in science policy. Recipients receive first-hand experience at the interface of science and public policy.

Winners receive:

- A trip to Washington, DC, to participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition Congressional Visits Day, an annual event that brings scientists to the nation's capital to advocate for federal investment in the biological sciences, with a primary focus on the National Science Foundation. The event will last for two days and will be held on 10-11 April 2013. Domestic travel and hotel expenses will be paid for the winners.
- Policy and communications training, and information on trends in federal science funding and the legislative process.
- Meetings with Congressional policymakers to discuss the importance of federal investments in the biological sciences.
- A 1-year AIBS membership, including a subscription to the journal *BioScience* and a copy of "*Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media.*"
- An award certificate and membership in the EPPLA alumni network.

The 2013 award is open to U.S. citizens enrolled in a graduate degree program in the biological sciences, science education, or a closely allied field. Applicants should have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to science policy and/or science education policy. Prior EPPLA winners and AIBS science policy interns/fellows are not eligible.

Applications are due by 5:00 PM Eastern Time on Monday, 28 January 2013. The award application can be downloaded at <http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/eppla.html>.

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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](http://www.NSCAlliance.org).

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changes send an email to [spotter@aibs.org](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).