

## **NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 4, Issue 4, April 19, 2013**

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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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### **President Obama's Budget Would Boost NSF Funding**

Scientific research and education programs would see an increase if President Obama's budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2014 were enacted. The President's budget would provide an 8.4 percent increase for the National Science Foundation (NSF), relative to FY 2012. The overall budget for the agency would be \$7.6 billion, an increase of \$593 million.

Increases are proposed for all mission areas within NSF. The Research and Related Activities account, which includes funding for the various disciplinary directorates, would receive an increase of 9.2 percent. This would fund an additional 4,600 competitive awards during the fiscal year, although the agency's funding rate is expected to remain at 24 percent. Education and Human Resources, which funds education research and various fellowships, would grow by 6.2 percent. Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction would increase by 6.6 percent. The budget for administrative efforts would receive a modest increase of 1.6 percent.

The budget for the Biological Sciences Directorate would increase by 6.8 percent to \$760.6 million. The number of research grants awarded and average award size would increase, as compared to the FY 2012 level. The funding rate across the directorate would jump from 15 percent in FY 2011 to 26 percent next year, largely due to the implementation of a new proposal submission process.

Digitization of scientific information associated with biological specimens held in U.S. research

collections would continue to be supported. According to NSF, FY 2014 investments would be guided by the strategic and implementation plans developed by the community.

A new program would be created with the Division of Environmental Biology to link long-term planetary biodiversity data with specimen and collections data. The Strategic Integration for Biological Sciences would be supported with \$2.0 million.

### **NSC Alliance Asks Congress to Sustain Funding for NSF**

The NSC Alliance has submitted testimony to the Senate and House of Representatives. The organization has expressed support for sustained funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fiscal year 2014.

“The progress of basic scientific research requires a steady federal investment,” stated the testimony authored by NSC Alliance President Larry Page. “Unpredictable swings in federal funding can disrupt research programs, create uncertainty in the research community, and impede the development of solutions to the nation’s most pressing problems.”

The testimony also highlighted the value of NSF’s support for digitization of scientific collections, biodiversity research, and informal science education.

The request was sent to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, which have jurisdiction over funding for NSF and other federal agencies.

Read the NSC Alliance testimony at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=631>.

### **New Solicitation for Collections in Support of Biological Research**

The National Science Foundation has issued a new solicitation for proposals for the Collections in Support of Biological Research program. The full proposal deadline is 16 July 2013.

The Collections in Support of Biological Research program provides funds: 1) for improvements to secure, improve, and organize collections that are significant to the NSF BIO-funded research community; 2) to secure collections-related data for sustained, accurate, and efficient accessibility of the collection to the biological research community; and 3) to transfer collection ownership responsibilities.

Read the solicitation at [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=503651](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503651).

### **USGS Launches New Program for Digital Biodiversity Records**

A new initiative by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) offers 100 million mapped records of nearly every living species in the U.S. Biodiversity Information Serving Our Nation (BISON) provides specific locations for the vast majority of records, not just county or state records.

“The USGS is proud to announce this monumental resource,” said Kevin Gallagher, Associate Director of USGS Core Science Systems, “and this is a testament to the power of combining the efforts of hundreds of thousands of professional and citizen scientists into a resource that uses Big Data and Open Data principles to deliver biodiversity information for sustaining the Nation’s environmental capital.”

Anticipated users of BISON include researchers, land managers, water resource managers, educators, citizen scientists, and others.

USGS is collaborating with other federal agencies to increase the data set. In addition, hundreds of thousands of researchers and citizen scientists have contributed data.

Access BISON at <http://bison.usgs.ornl.gov/>.

### **Congress Maintains Spending Cuts in FY 2013 Appropriations**

Lawmakers have avoided a government shutdown with passage of a Continuing Resolution for fiscal year (FY) 2013. The legislation, H.R. 933, will fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends on 30 September 2013.

Since the legislation maintains the \$85 billion sequestration cuts, the net impact for most federal agencies is a budget decrease.

Although the original House bill only granted fiscal flexibility to defense programs, the Senate amended the legislation to provide more flexibility to the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security, and Justice, among other agencies.

A few science agencies were among the entities granted budget increases under a Senate-adopted amendment to the legislation. Although these are increases relative to FY 2012, after the effects of sequestration, these agencies will receive a budget cut.

The Senate gave an additional \$221 million to the National Science Foundation (NSF); accounting for sequestration, the agency will be cut by about two percent relative to FY 2012. The increase for NSF was largely due to the efforts of Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). Her figure for NSF’s research account was \$50 million higher than an earlier Senate mark and \$100 million more than the House number. NSF’s education directorate was marked for an additional \$20 million more than the President’s budget request.

The National Institutes of Health received an extra \$71 million, which will partly offset the \$1.5 billion cut resulting from budget sequestration. At \$5 billion, the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration also received a slight increase relative to last year, prior to the effects of sequestration. The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative received a ten percent boost, which means that it will be one of a handful of programs that comes out ahead financially even after accounting for the five percent cut from sequester.

The legislation maintains a pay freeze for federal workers, which means that employees will go three years without a pay increase.

The Senate considered many amendments before a deal was struck for final passage of the legislation. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) successfully offered an amendment that bars NSF from awarding any grants on political science research unless the agency's director can explain how the research promotes "national security or the economic interests of the United States."

Congress could still act to adjust the terms of sequestration. Barring that action, the Continuing Resolution will likely be the final instructions to federal agencies on FY 2013 spending, which lasts through September.

### **Congress Passes Budget Plans for 2014**

The House and Senate have each passed a budget resolution for FY 2014. Although a budget resolution is not binding, it does provide a target for total spending for the federal government for the upcoming fiscal year. FY 2014 starts on 1 October 2013. Both plans set the same legally required discretionary spending limit of \$966 billion for FY 2014. Discretionary programs include defense, education, science, environmental conservation, housing, foreign affairs, and other programs.

Although the House and Senate plans share the same top line budget number for next year, they offer different spending limits for future years and address sequestration and deficit reduction differently.

The House of Representatives continued its efforts to cut federal spending. The lower chamber's plan would reduce the deficit by \$4.6 trillion over a ten-year period. The House budget resolution, authored by Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI), would essentially wipe out the effect of sequestration on the military and transfer those cuts to domestic programs.

The Ryan plan would also extend the timeframe for the spending caps enacted in 2011. The caps on discretionary spending are currently set to end in 2021. The House resolution would extend them to the years 2022 and 2023. These caps would limit future growth in discretionary spending across the government.

The Senate budget resolution sets a smaller goal for reducing spending over the next decade. The plan created by Senate Budget Chairwoman Patty Murray would cut the deficit by \$600 to \$700 billion over a decade, while still replacing budget sequestration. This would be achieved through equal parts spending cuts and revenue increases.

The Senate plan would lower discretionary spending, but not as much as the House plan. These cuts would start in FY 2015. The Democratic plan would boost spending for infrastructure, clean energy, climate change research, and environmental protection by \$100 billion over ten years.

### **Advances in Computational Research Transform Scientific Process and Discovery**

The National Science Foundation is highlighting some of the research advances that have been made possible because of supercomputing. From better prediction of earthquakes to describing the minute details of proteins, supercomputers are enabling researchers to push the boundaries of scientific knowledge.

“Science is now investing in these super computers, and they are where many new scientific discoveries are being made,” said Michael Wiltberger, who studies space weather at the high altitude observatory of the National Science Foundation. “These computers are moving science out of the ivory tower and out into the real world, where it can have a direct impact on peoples’ lives.”

Read more at

[http://www.nsf.gov/discoveries/disc\\_summ.jsp?cntn\\_id=127385&WT.mc\\_id=USNSF\\_51&WT.mc\\_ev=click](http://www.nsf.gov/discoveries/disc_summ.jsp?cntn_id=127385&WT.mc_id=USNSF_51&WT.mc_ev=click).

### **NSC Alliance Board Meeting to be Held in June**

The next meeting of the NSC Alliance Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, 19 June 2013 from 10 a.m. to noon (central time) in Rapid City, South Dakota at the 2013 annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC). The board meeting is the day before the NSC Alliance - iDigBio sponsored symposium on digitization and dissemination of natural history data. For more information on the symposium, please see <http://cfrspnhc2013.com/idigbio-and-nsca-symposium.html>. This link also provides information about the SPNCH meeting and registering for the meeting.

### **Request a Copy of the NIBA Implementation Plan**

It's not too late to request a copy of the *Implementation Plan for the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance*. The report calls for the creation of a Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance (NIBA) to increase research productivity, solve societal problems, and drive innovation. The report was the outcome of a workshop of experts that was convened last fall to outline the steps needed to build NIBA in the next ten years. When built, NIBA will provide online access to digitized data for biological specimens held in natural history museums, university science departments, and government laboratories, among other repositories. Request a free copy of the report at <http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/biocollections.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).

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](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).