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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 Support Proposed Funding for Interior Collections

The NSC Alliance has submitted testimony to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. The testimony supported President Obama's request for \$2.0 million in new funding for the Department of the Interior's Cultural and Scientific Collections program.

The FY 2014 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 to the Smithsonian Institution.

Read the testimony at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=644>.

Report Details Proposed Changes to Federal Science Funding

President Obama released a \$3.8 trillion budget plan for fiscal year (FY) 2014 on 10 April 2013. According to the White House, the budget proposal would reduce the federal deficit by

increasing revenues and cutting spending. The proposal would replace sequestration, the \$1.2 trillion in automatic spending cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act.

Science is a priority in the President's budget request, [according to a new analysis by the American Institute of Biological Sciences](#). The Administration proposed \$142.8 billion for federal research and development (R&D), an increase of 1.3 percent over the 2012 level. Although defense R&D would be cut by 5.2 percent, non-defense R&D would increase by 9.2 percent to \$69.6 billion.

Nearly all science agencies and biological research programs would see increased funding in FY 2014. Notably, the National Science Foundation would receive an 8.4 percent increase. Other science programs slated for a budget increase include the National Institutes of Health, Department of Energy Office of Science, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Agriculture, and several Department of the Interior bureaus. Funding for Environmental Protection Agency science would be reduced.

Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs would be consolidated across the federal government. More than 100 programs at 11 agencies are targeted for elimination or reorganization. Some programs would be moved to the Department of Education, National Science Foundation, or Smithsonian Institution.

Download a free copy of the AIBS report on science funding in the President's budget request at www.aibs.org/public-policy/budget_report.html.

President Obama Orders Federal Agencies to Make Data More Accessible

On 9 May 2013, the White House released a policy on public accessibility to government data. The new policy directs federal agencies to change their practices so that new data is digital and therefore more accessible. Agencies are encouraged, but not required, to make existing data "machine-readable."

The policy does not necessarily call for making all data public, but data sets that can be released to the public should be listed on data.gov. Agencies will be required to create an in-house inventory and public list of data sets.

In addition to outlining detailed instructions for how to make data available and the format of the data, the policy requires agencies to apply metadata about where and when the information was collected.

Costa Rican Collections Turned Over to Government

INBio, Costa Rica's National Biodiversity Institute, has surrendered 3.5 million biological specimens to the nation's government as a result of financial difficulties. According to some

news accounts, INBio's current annual budget is nearly a million dollars short of what is needed to maintain the collections and facilities.

INBio gained international prominence in the 1990s as a model for bioprospecting. An agreement with the pharmaceutical company Merck, however, failed to generate enough income to support operations. Large declines in foreign aid over the past decade also contributed to the institute's financial problems.

Final Rule Makes Some Changes to NAGPRA

The Department of the Interior has made changes to the regulations that implement the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The new rule makes revisions "for accuracy and consistency," according to the notice published in the Federal Register. The new rule takes effect on 10 June 2013.

Many of the revisions are minor. Among the more substantive changes are:

- Clarification of notification requirements to linear descendants. Notification is required to known lineal descendants of a deceased Native American individual whose human remains and associated funerary objects were inadvertently discovered.
- Text was added to clarify that, with respect to recoveries from federal lands, the priority of right of control of human remains and associated funerary objects defaults to a culturally affiliated Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization only where the lineal descendants of the deceased Native American cannot be ascertained. With respect to other cultural items recovered from federal lands, the priority of ownership is in the culturally affiliated Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization.

Read the new rule at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-05-09/html/2013-10966.htm>.

iDigBio Seeks Information on Genetic Resource Repositories

iDigBio is actively compiling a list of DNA banking facilities and genetic resource repositories in the United States that maintain collections of nucleic acid extracts (DNA or RNA) or preserved tissues suitable for genetic and genomic studies of biodiversity. Currently, there are few comprehensive online resources available to aid researchers in: 1) identifying repositories for long-term preservation of research materials no longer in use, as well as for materials and extracts used as part of published studies; and 2) locating sources of useful genetic resources for current or future scientific studies.

iDigBio is helping to address this problem with the development of a new online resource of DNA Banks and Genetic Resource Repositories in the United States, which already includes information and links to 45 collections. To report new information about available genetic resources at your institution, please contact [Grant Godden](#).

Learn more at <https://www.idigbio.org/content/idigbio-links-dna-banks-and-genetic-resource-repositories-new-web-feature-requests-community>.

Deadlines Approaching for SPNHC Meeting

The Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections is meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota on 17-22 June 2013. Paper, poster, and Demo Camp submissions are due by 15 May. Early bird registration also closes on 15 May. Learn more at <http://cfrspnhc2013.com/index.html>.

NSF Seeks New Program Director for Advancing the Digitization of Biodiversity Collections

The National Science Foundation is advertising a position vacancy for Program Director for the Advancing the Digitization of Biodiversity Collections program. It is being advertised as both a permanent position and as a rotating position.

Permanent Program Director: <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/342543200>
Rotating Program Director: <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/342544100>

Calling All Armchair Taxonomists

The Encyclopedia of Life is hosting a challenge to describe the world's diversity of life. Contestants are asked to research and write short descriptions of some of nature's most fascinating species. Those descriptions will be reviewed by curators for inclusion in the Encyclopedia of Life. The best descriptions will earn their writers a private behind-the-scenes tour of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History.

The contest details are available at <http://boingboing.net/2013/04/22/armchairtaxonomist.html>.

NEON Seeks Participants for Collections Technical Working Group

Field activities related to the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) will result in the collection of a variety of biodiversity samples that will be archived in museums around the United States. NEON is currently seeking members of the scientific community to serve on the Collections Technical Working Group. This group will provide guidance on NEON activities related to scientific research collections.

The Collections Technical Working Group will respond to NEON inquiries for input and comment on scientific, technical, and implementation issues related to the collections program approximately four times per year. NEON seeks a diverse group with expertise and experience in collections and archiving to help ensure that NEON collection activities have a strong

scientific base and will produce a resource that is most useful to the community. Both self-nominations and/or suggestions of names of colleagues who might be interested are welcome.

Nominations are due by 15 May 2013. For more information please visit <http://neoninc.org/content/membersCTWG>.

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.