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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.

House Bill Would Increase NSF Funding

The National Science Foundation (NSF) could see a \$111 million increase next year if legislation approved by the House of Representatives panel with jurisdiction over funding for the agency is enacted. The proposed 1.6 percent increase is less than President Obama requested for NSF, but is more than the agency received this year after accounting for budget sequestration. The proposed increase is especially notable given the lower overall funding allocations set by the House for fiscal year 2014. If the House funding levels were to be enacted, they would not be subject to an across the board cut due to sequestration because the total spending caps comply with federal law.

NSF's Research and Related Activities account would be the primary beneficiary of the proposed funding increase. This budget account includes the Biological Sciences Directorate. Overall funding for Research and Related Activities would increase by \$132.5 million to \$5.7 billion. Funding for education would be cut by one percent, and Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction would decline by seven percent.

The draft bill is awaiting action by the full House Appropriations Committee. The Senate is expected to announce their proposal for NSF funding this week. There is little optimism inside the beltway that many appropriations bills will be enacted before the start of the new fiscal year on 1 October 2013.

Deadline Approaching: Sign Up to Showcase Science to Policymakers

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is proud to announce that it is sponsoring the *5th Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits* event – an initiative of the American Institute of Biological Sciences and Entomological Society of America.

This national initiative is an opportunity for scientists across the country to meet with their federal or state elected officials to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

The *5th Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits* event will be held throughout the month of August 2013. This event is an opportunity for scientists, graduate students, representatives of research facilities, and people affiliated with scientific collections to meet with their elected officials without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite their elected officials to visit their research facility or can meet at the policymaker's local office.

Participants will be prepared for their meeting with a lawmaker through an interactive training webinar. Individuals participating in this event will receive information about improving their communication skills, tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official, and information about federal funding for biological research.

Participation is free for NSC Alliance members, but registration will close on 15 July 2013. For more information and to register, visit http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

NSC Alliance Partners with NPS for National Fossil Day

The NSC Alliance has joined with hundreds of museums and other scientific organizations to advance National Fossil Day, a celebration organized by the National Park Service (NPS) to promote public awareness and stewardship of fossils. The fourth annual event will be held on 16 October 2013. Learn more at <http://nature.nps.gov/geology/nationalfossilday/>.

Call for Nominations for National Science Board

The National Science Board is seeking nominations for candidates to serve a six-year term starting in 2014. Candidates should have a demonstrated record of distinguished service and outstanding scientific credentials. Additionally, the Board is seeking candidates with expertise in large facility planning and management, international research, metrics and performance measurement, neuroscience, undergraduate research, or other topics. Nominations are open through 29 July 2013. For more information, visit http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=128423&WT.mc_id=USNSF_51&WT.mc_ev=click.

USAID Releases First Policy on Biodiversity Conservation

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has released a draft policy that “seeks to advance biodiversity conservation as an essential component of human development.”

The policy outlines three outcomes: 1) conserve biodiversity in priority places, 2) improved development outcomes from integrating biodiversity conservation and development, and 3) enhance global biodiversity conservation practice through USAID leadership. Read the draft report online at <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID-Biodiversity-Policy-Draft-6-7-13.pdf>.

Deadline Approaching for Proposals for Collections in Support of Biological Research

Proposals for the National Science Foundation’s Collections in Support of Biological Research program are due 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.

NSF Seeks Proposals for Digitization Program

The National Science Foundation is accepting proposals for the Advancing Digitization of Biodiversity Collections program. This initiative seeks to enhance and expand digital data documenting existing vouchered biological and paleontological collections. The deadline for full proposals is 18 October 2013. More information is available at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13569/nsf13569.htm>.

Information Sought on Big Data Collaborations

The federal government is requesting information on high-impact collaborative efforts on big data and potential areas of expanded collaboration between the public and private sectors. Learn more at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-06-21/html/2013-14746.htm>.

Blog Demonstrates Importance of Natural History Collections

A recent post on the blog “The Lab and Field” explored why natural history museums are “essential for science.” The blogger described his recent use of bird specimens to study moult

energetics in Least Auklets. The species spends most of the year over the Pacific Ocean, where they are inaccessible to researchers. Using 60 specimens of Least Auklets from museum collections in Canada, the U.S., Russia, and Japan, the researcher was able to determine moulting patterns throughout the year, not just when the species is on land for breeding. Learn more at <http://labandfield.wordpress.com/2013/06/29/natural-history-museums/>.

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.