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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. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution.

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.

Congress Approves Deal to Reduce Sequestration

This week, the Senate passed a bicameral deal to raise discretionary spending by \$63 billion over the next two years. The measure had previously passed the House of Representatives. The deal provides less funding than pre-sequester levels, but will increase federal spending from \$967 billion to \$1.012 trillion this year. The increase will be equally split between defense and non-defense programs. Unlike the across-the-board spending cuts imposed by sequestration, the new agreement allows congressional appropriators to choose specific programs to trim.

The budget agreement was negotiated by Senate Budget Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) and House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI). In addition to increasing funding for programs that have been squeezed by budget sequestration, the deal saves \$28 billion over ten years by requiring the President to sequester the same percentage of mandatory funding in the years 2022 and 2023 as will be sequestered in 2021 under current law. Federal employees hired after 31 December 2013 will also have to contribute 1.3 percent more to their retirement programs than current employees.

“This agreement replaces a portion of the across-the-board spending cuts known as ‘the sequester’ that have harmed students, seniors, and middle-class families and served as a mindless drag on our economy over the last year,” said President Obama. “It clears the path for critical investments in things like scientific research, which has the potential to unleash new innovation and new industries. It’s balanced, and includes targeted fee increases and spending cuts designed

in a way that doesn't hurt our economy or break the ironclad promises we've made to our seniors. It does all this while slightly reducing our deficits over time – coming on top of four years of the fastest deficit reduction since the end of World War II. And because it's the first budget that leaders of both parties have agreed to in a few years, the American people should not have to endure the pain of another government shutdown for the next two years.”

Despite objections from conservative interest groups, the House passed the budget deal in a bipartisan vote of 332 to 94. The measure had the support of three-quarters of Republican Representatives and more than 80 percent of Democrats. Senators voted 64-36 to approved the legislation; all Senate Democrats, two independents, and nine Republicans voted in favor of the bill.

NSF Seeks New Assistant Director for Biological Sciences

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has initiated a national search for a new Assistant Director for the Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO).

Dr. John Wingfield has served as Assistant Directorate for BIO since September 2011. His replacement could serve on a temporary or permanent basis.

Candidates with the following qualifications are sought: outstanding leadership; a deep sense of scholarship; a grasp of the issues facing the biological sciences; and the ability to serve effectively as a key member of the NSF senior management team. Recommendations of individuals from academic, industry, or government sectors are welcome. The search committee is especially interested in identifying women, members of minority groups, and persons with disabilities for consideration.

Recommendations, including any supporting information, should be sent to biosrch@nsf.gov by 15 February 2014.

Multinational Science Body Sets Work Plan on Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has agreed to develop a set of scientific assessments on pollination and food production, land degradation, and invasive species. These will be the first issues the international scientific body will address as part of its mission to inform decision-making using synthesized and vetted scientific information.

Roughly 400 delegates from more than 100 countries negotiated the work program. Nations have pledged more than half of the \$43.5 million of funding required to fulfill the work program.

“The decisions taken at this meeting represent a milestone in our efforts to counter the degradation and loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services,” stated Ibrahim Thiaw, deputy executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. “A firm understanding of the complex processes at play is essential to conserve these services for future generations, and

IPBES will help ensure that countries have direct access to sound scientific knowledge for development planning and for the full integration of ecosystem services in our accounting systems.”

The first assessment will review the effectiveness of current policies to protect pollination services that underpin three-quarters of world crop production. This assessment could be finished by December 2015.

Another assessment will evaluate the connections between land degradation, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and food production.

The assessments will be based on the contributions of thousands of scientists from around the world, who will synthesize scientific information and produce tools to support relevant environmental policy decisions.

Participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Congressional Visits Day

Scientists and graduate students who are interested in communicating the importance of federal investments in scientific research and education to lawmakers are invited to participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition (BESC) Congressional Visits Day in Washington, DC.

This event is an opportunity for scientists to meet with their members of Congress to discuss the importance of federal funding for biological research and education. Event participants advocate for federal investments in biological sciences research, with a primary focus on the National Science Foundation, as well as other federal agencies.

BESC is co-chaired by the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Ecological Society of America.

This year's event will be held on 9-10 April 2014 in Washington, DC. The first day is a training program that will prepare participants for meetings with congressional offices. The second day is spent on Capitol Hill meeting with members of Congress and their staff.

There is no cost to participate in this event, but space is limited. BESC and its member organizations are not able to pay/reimburse participants for their expenses.

Learn more about the event and express your interest in participating at http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_visits_day.html. The deadline to sign up is 5 March 2014.

Resources for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation

The National Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Program has announced its fiscal year 2014 grant guidelines. Grants will be available to museums for documenting Native American human remains and cultural items in their care. Monies will also be available for consultation with tribes regarding the control and treatment of NAGPRA-related human remains and objects. More information is available at http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/GRANTS/FY2014/FY2014_NAGPRA_Grant_Guidelines.pdf.

Other resources from the National NAGPRA Program include [online databases](#) of inventoried items and tribal contacts, and [videos](#) that explain the consultation process.

Nominations Sought for Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility is currently accepting applications for two positions from highly qualified candidates with outstanding academic and technical credentials, and a passion for advancing and improving the science/policy interface, in the areas of Biodiversity and Chemicals.

The successful candidate must have:

Professionalism:

1. An advanced degree, preferably a PhD in a field directly related to the position;
2. Minimum 15 years experience in scientific research – and the application of results to real-world issues;
3. Ability to work cross-sectorally in areas of importance related to their field of expertise;
4. Capable of bridging scientific, technological, and policy issues;
5. Capable of linking bio-physical and economic, socio-economic/sociocultural issues;
6. Experience working in developing countries and in the context of multi-lateral environmental assistance;
7. Demonstrated ability to manage scientific research undertakings involving multiple stakeholders;
8. Excellent communication skills, orally or written.
9. Understanding of the assigned GEF focal area, its strategic objectives, and linkages with other GEF focal areas is an asset.

Leadership:

1. Extensive access to scientific networks, and demonstrated ability to engage these networks;
2. Demonstrated expertise and leadership in one of the thematic areas noted above, supported by (but not restricted to) the candidate's peer-reviewed publication record;
3. Knowledge of the scientific processes required for the implementation of relevant conventions in developing countries for which the GEF supports.

A STAP Panel Member is expected to provide 60 to 90 days per year to the work of STAP. Remuneration is based on UN scales for senior consultants. A full description of responsibilities, and application forms, are available at: <http://www.stagef.org/notice-of-recruitment->

[biodiversity-and-chemicals-waste-panel-members-2014/](#). Applications along with a cover letter should be sent to Recruitment.STAPGEF@UNEP.org, quoting the relevant vacancy reference number in the subject line of your email. All applications should be sent on or before the deadline of 31 January 2014.

Upcoming iDigBio Workshop on Paleontology Specimen Imaging

A workshop will be held on 29 April to 1 May 2014 on imaging solutions for paleontological specimens and research. The workshop will focus on hands-on experimentation with several types of imaging stations, camera, microscopes, and image acquisition and processing software. Participant travel and lodging expenses will be paid for by iDigBio. The workshop will be held at the University of Texas, Austin. Learn more at <http://mailman.yale.edu/pipermail/nhcoll-1/attachments/20131217/1c884dc7/attachment.pdf>.

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.

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact spotter@aibs.org.