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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.

House Advances Bill to Fund NSF at \$7.4 Billion

A bill to fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) at \$7.4 billion in 2015 passed from the House Appropriations Committee last week. If enacted by Congress, the plan would provide NSF an additional \$237.3 million above the fiscal year (FY) 2014 level. The proposed funding level is \$154.2 million higher than President Obama requested for NSF in FY 2015.

The House bill would provide a three percent increase for NSF's Research and Related Activities. This budget account funds the various research directorates at NSF, including the Biological Sciences Directorate. This is about \$170 million more than the agency's FY 2015 budget request.

Funding for Education and Human Resources would grow by 3.5 percent, less than the 5.1 percent increase proposed in the President's budget request. Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction would be funded at the requested level of \$200.8 million.

NSC Alliance Member Organizations Honored at White House Ceremony

On 8 May 2014, three NSC Alliance members were awarded the nation's highest honor conferred on museums and libraries for service to the community. First Lady Michelle Obama presented the National Medal for Museum and Library Service to five museums and five libraries. Among the 2014 award winners are the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.

The award is presented by the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

“Congratulations to the 2014 winners of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. From programs that foster passion for science, literature and cultural heritage, to critical 21st century skills training for improved educational outcomes and workforce readiness, the services and programs of these institutions truly do make a difference,” said Susan H. Hildreth, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. “We thank each of this year’s medal recipients for their innovation and their dedication to serving their communities.”

“Brooklyn Botanic Garden is tremendously honored to receive the 2014 National Medal for Museum and Library Service from IMLS,” said Scot Medbury, president of Brooklyn Botanic Garden. “Winning the medal this year is especially meaningful as BBG celebrates the centennial of its pioneering Children’s Garden.”

Brooklyn Botanic Garden was founded in 1910 as an urban botanic garden. One hundred years ago, BBG launched the first-ever children’s garden within a public botanic garden, where generations of city children have learned to plant, tend, and harvest their own garden plots.

“For many years, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences has been an invaluable resource to our state’s people,” said U.S. Representative David Price (NC). “It has helped generations of North Carolinians discover not only our state’s unique natural history and unique habitats, but also our shared responsibility to preserve these treasures for future generations.”

The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in downtown Raleigh is the state’s most visited cultural attraction. It is an active research institution that engages visitors of all ages in the wonders of science and the natural world.

“The Sam Noble Museum is proud to be selected for this national honor. We share this award with the people of Oklahoma who made this museum and its programs possible and who continue to support us in every way,” said Michael Mares, museum director and a past president of NSC Alliance.

The Sam Noble Museum was founded in 1899 and is located on the campus of the University of Oklahoma. In 1987, the museum was designated as the state’s natural history museum. The museum houses more than 10 million objects.

NSC Alliance Releases New Resource on Importance of Collections to Wildlife Management

The Natural Science Collections Alliance has prepared a short report on how natural history collections contribute to wildlife management. “Informing Wildlife Management: Genetics Research Uses Natural History Collections” shows how researchers use genetic information preserved in scientific collections in cutting-edge wildlife research. Natural history collections are being used to prevent bird strikes with aircraft, better understand population genetics, and potentially revive extinct species.

Download a free copy of the issue brief at <http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/nsca-wildlife-management.pdf>. Access other reports in NSC Alliance’s series “On the Importance of Scientific Collections” at http://nscalliance.org/?page_id=10.

Solicitation of Proposals for Collections in Support of Biological Research

The National Science Foundation has announced that the Collections in Support of Biological Research program is back to an annual funding cycle. A new call for proposals (NSF 14-564) was recently released with a deadline of 11 August 2014.

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.

View the solicitation at http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503651.

Calculating the Costs of Curating Specimens

Many publications have extolled the value of natural history collections, however few have calculated the cost of caring for scientific specimens. A recent paper estimates the cost of incorporating specimens into a natural history collection and making them accessible to researchers and the public.

On average, it cost \$17.51 per specimen for curation, installation, documentation, and databasing. Long-term care is estimated to cost \$0.25 per year per specimen.

“Door to Drawer: Costs of Curation, Installation, Documentation, Databasing, and Long-Term Care of Mammal Voucher Specimens in Natural History Collections” was authored by a team of researchers at the Natural Science Research Laboratory at the Museum of Texas Tech University.

The paper can be downloaded for free at <http://www.nsrll.ttu.edu/publications/opapers/ops/OP323.pdf>.

Experts Needed for International Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Issues

Nominations are sought for experts to serve as advisors to the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The U.S. government and other nations are collecting the names of scientists who could serve on an expert panel on land degradation and restoration. The Ecological Society of America is soliciting names and will forward its nominations to the U.S. government.

IPBES is a global program intended to strengthen the role of science in decision-making related to the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The deadline to apply to ESA is 28 May 2014. Learn more at http://www.esa.org/esa/?%20page_id=11269.

NSF Seeks Community Input on Genomes-Phenomes Research Frontiers

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has launched a Wiki to seek community input on the grand challenge of understanding the complex relationship between genomes and phenomes. The Wiki is intended to facilitate discussion among researchers in diverse disciplines that intersect with biology, such as computation, mathematics, engineering, physics, and chemistry.

The Wiki format encourages open communication, captures new viewpoints, and promotes free exchange of ideas about the bottlenecks that impede progress on the genomes-phenomes grand challenge and approaches or strategies to overcome these challenges. Information provided through the Wiki will help inform BIO's future research investments and activities relevant to understanding genomes-phenomes relationships.

To provide comments, ask questions and view input from and interact with other community members, first-time users should sign up for an account at <https://extwiki.nsf.gov/signup.action>.

Informal Education Research Funding Opportunity

A new funding opportunity is available that will provide up to \$14.4 million to support research into how learning happens outside the classroom. The new program is supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation, UK-based Wellcome Trust, UK Economic and Social Research Council and other collaborators including the MacArthur Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and the Noyce Foundation.

Science Learning+ aims to (1) to learn more about, evaluate, and maximize the impact of informal learning experiences, and (2) to improve understanding of how informal environments may help to widen access to STEM for youth from all backgrounds.

Learn more at <http://www.informalscience.org/perspectives/news/new-international-partnership-funding-opportunity-available-science-learnin>.

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest

Biological research is transforming our society and the world. Help the public and policymakers better understand the breadth of biology by entering the Faces of Biology Photo Contest. The competition is sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS).

The theme of the contest is “Faces of Biology.” Photographs entered into the contest must depict a person, such a scientist, technician, or student, engaging in biological research. The depicted research may occur outside, in a lab, with a natural history collection, on a computer, in a classroom, or elsewhere.

The First Place Winner will have his/her winning photo featured on the cover of *BioScience*, and will receive \$250 and a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to the journal. The Second and Third Place Winners will have his/her winning photo printed inside *BioScience*, and will receive a one year membership in AIBS.

The contest ends on 30 September 2014 at 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time. For more information and to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

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.