

In this Issue:

- Inform the Future, Share Your Thoughts with the NIBA Advisory Council
 - Information Collection Proposed for Non-Federal Interior Collection Curators
 - Smithsonian Would Receive \$116 Million in New Funding in President's Budget Request
 - Nominations Being Accepted for IPBES Regional Assessments
 - Participate in the Small Collections Survey
 - Experts Sought for Review of International Biodiversity Assessments
 - Four New Species Discovered in Insect Collections
 - Accept the Challenge to Go Beyond the Box
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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. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at www.NSCAlliance.org -- it's free!

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.

Inform the Future, Share Your Thoughts with the NIBA Advisory Council

The Advisory Council for the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance Research Coordination Network is undertaking a review of the Strategic and Implementation Plan for the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance. The purpose of this review is to evaluate progress made to date and to identify potential gaps in these plans and priorities for future initiatives. To inform this review, the Advisory Council would like to hear from the community.

The Strategic Plan set the biocollections community in the United States on a 10-year course to digitize and mobilize the scientific information associated with biological specimens held in U.S. research collections. The Implementation Plan published in 2013 included six recommendations for realizing the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance. These recommendations are:

1. Establish an organizational and governance structure that will provide the national leadership and decision-making mechanism required to implement NIBA and to fully realize its Strategic Plan.
2. Advance engineering of the US biocollections cyberinfrastructure.

3. Enhance the training of existing collections staff and create the next generation of biodiversity information managers.
4. Increase support for and participation in NIBA by the research community and a broad spectrum of stakeholders.
5. Establish an enduring and sustainable knowledge base.
6. Infuse specimen-based learning and exploration into formal and informal education.

For more detail on these recommendations, please refer to the [Strategic](#) and [Implementations Plans](#).

The Advisory Council would appreciate hearing community perspectives on the following:

- Are these recommendations still appropriate?
- Are there items that were not included in the plan that should have been?
- Are there items that have been completely or partially addressed by existing initiatives or groups? What are these and which goals do they specifically address?
- Have needs emerged that should be considered if the NIBA is to be achieved?
- Are you aware of new partnerships or collaborations with non-traditional users of biocollections?
- General thoughts and recommendations.

Thoughts and recommendations about these or other items can be shared by leaving a comment on the NIBAlliance.org homepage.

Information Collection Proposed for Non-Federal Interior Collection Curators

The Department of the Interior is proposing to collect information from museums, university departments, and other curators of federal collections about their compliance with federal laws, regulations, and departmental policy pertaining to the documentation, management, and preservation of Interior museum collections.

The annual information collection is estimated to take 2 hours and 20 minutes per respondent. Information collected would include:

- A facility checklist to assess and evaluate exhibit, storage, and administrative office spaces that house Interior museum collections to ensure compliance with Department requirements.
- A catalog records of Interior museum objects, including accession number; catalog number; discipline and classification; object or scientific name; unit acronym and/or identifier; controlled property status; item count or quantity; current location; description; condition; date cataloged; cataloger; and other required discipline-specific information related to scientific collections and archives, such as provenience, collector, collection site, date and number, and archival scope, content, organization or arrangement.
- Accession records of Interior museum objects and collections, including accession number; source and contact information; date received; date accessioned; accession type;

description; project name; item total by discipline; catalog status; and any catalog numbers in the accession.

- Inventories of Interior museum collections, including object found; item count; location; condition; date of inventory; and inventory method.
- Other information, including the estimated number of Interior collections at the facility, if applicable; accession numbers of Interior collections; number of catalog records for Interior collections; type of museum catalog database used, if applicable; existence of Interior NAGPRA collections; inventory status; and research use.

About ten percent of Interior's collections are managed by non-federal partners.

Public comments on the proposed information collection are due by 5 March 2015. Learn more at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-02-03/html/2015-01880.htm>.

Smithsonian Would Receive \$116 Million in New Funding in President's Budget Request

President Obama's budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2016 would provide \$935.8 million for the Smithsonian Institution, an increase of 14.2 percent. Smithsonian is also funded by private donations and a trust fund.

New funding is once again proposed for care and access to collections. The budget includes an increase of \$1.8 million to digitize collections and make them accessible online. Nearly two million dollars is proposed for strengthening curatorial staffing. Support for preservation of collections would increase by \$3.0 million. This funding level would allow Smithsonian to address deficiencies and implement recommendations made by the Smithsonian Inspector General.

A new research initiative to better understand biodiversity genomics would receive \$360,000. The effort builds upon the findings of NSF's Tree of Life program. The research will shed light on the origins of life, evolution, and ecosystem resilience.

Funding for the Marine Global Earth Observatories would increase to support network expansion in order to better understand changes in marine ecosystem structure and function.

The budget request includes an additional \$5 million for STEM education. Smithsonian would work with federal agencies to identify and disseminate content that "takes advantage of each agency's unique assets; create complementary materials and avoid duplication of effort; and share a centralized portal for the broad dissemination of our engagement offerings," according to budget documents.

Several Smithsonian facilities used for research and curation of scientific collections would be renovated under the proposed FY 2016 budget. The National Museum of Natural History would receive \$23.0 million for revitalization work. Smithsonian's two environmental research centers would also receive new funding for construction.

Nominations Being Accepted for IPBES Regional Assessments

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is seeking nominations of natural and social scientists to serve on committees that will create regional and sub-regional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Groups are being convened for the Americas, Africa, Asia and Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.

The Ecological Society of America is assisting the U.S. government in identifying American experts to serve. For more information, visit <http://esa.org/ipbes/regscoping/>.

Participate in the Small Collections Survey

iDigBio, the Small Collections Network, and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections are conducting a survey of small natural history collections. If you are associated with what you define as a small collection in your domain, whether in a museum, academic institution, field or research station, or elsewhere, please take a few minutes to complete the survey at https://ufl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eWBSss5hEibZ3WB.

Experts Sought for Review of International Biodiversity Assessments

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is seeking experts to review draft reports on pollinators and policy support.

To register for the thematic assessment of pollinators, pollination and food production, complete the registration form at <http://www.ipbes.net/component/content/article.html?layout=edit&id=634>.

To register for the policy support tools and methodologies for scenario analysis and modeling of biodiversity and ecosystem services, email TSU-IPBES.scenarios@pbl.nl to request a registration form.

Registration for potential reviewers will close in February. Reviewers will have until 2 March 2015 to complete their work.

Four New Species Discovered in Insect Collections

Four previously unknown cricket species were discovered by a researcher working with insect collections in Spain and Germany. Bruno Massa of the University of Palermo made the discoveries.

“European museums preserved collections containing thousands of specimens coming from all the world in the last two centuries,” Massa said. “Of course, many of them still need to be

studied and identified.”

The discovery highlights the need for better access to scientific collections through digitization of and online access to natural history specimens. The Beyond the Box Digitization Competition aims to improve the digitization of insect specimens. See the next article for more information about the competition.

Read the paper in [ZooKeys](#) or coverage in [The Washington Post](#).

Accept the Challenge to Go Beyond the Box

Do not forget to accept the challenge to go Beyond the Box. There are only 28 weeks left to enter the Beyond the Box Digitization Competition from the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the National Science Foundation. The competition will award \$1 million to the person or team who creates a technology that increases the speed and accuracy of digitization of a drawer of insect specimens and their associated data. Learn more at <http://beyondthebox.aibs.org>.

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.