

NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 6, Issue 5, May 26, 2015

In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance Sponsored Symposium at SPNHC Conference
 - NIBA Research Coordination Network Becomes Biodiversity Collections Network
 - NSC Alliance Provides Testimony on Interior Appropriations
 - House Passes COMPETES Act with Some Amendments
 - House Appropriations Committee Passes Bill to Modestly Boost NSF Funding, Makes Major Cuts to Geo and Social Sciences
 - National Fossil Day is Coming
 - IPBES Seeks Nominations for New Fellowship
 - NSC Alliance Board of Directors Meeting
-

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.

NSC Alliance Sponsored Symposium at SPNHC Conference

On 20 May 2015 the annual meeting of the Society for Preservation of Natural History Collections kicked off in Gainesville, Florida with a Plenary Session planned by the NSC Alliance, iDigBio, and the NIBA Research Coordination Network.

The Plenary, "Collections for the 21st Century," featured:

- Larry M. Page, Director, iDigBio, Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida
In Defense of Specimen Collecting, Natural History Collections, and Bioethics.
- Susan Middleton, independent artist, photographer, author and educator, and Research Associate, California Academy of Sciences
Evidence of Evolution: Darwin's Cabinet of Curiosities
- Erin Tripp, Curator of Botany, Museum of Natural History, and Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, University of Colorado
Endless Forms, Most Useful
- Austin Mast, Associate Professor, Department of Biological Science, Florida State University

WeDigBio—Public Participation in Digitization of Natural History Collections Hits its Stride

- Quentin Wheeler, President, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, State University of New York

Time to Grow a Pair: Institutional Leadership, Taxonomy and Natural History

- Robert Gropp, Director, Public Policy Office, AIBS and NSC Alliance, Washington, DC

Building a Networked National Community for Collections

The program, which was broadcast live by iDigBio, will also be archived and made available in the coming weeks.

NIBA Research Coordination Network Becomes Biodiversity Collections Network

The Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance Research Coordination Network has changed its name. The initiative, which NSC Alliance is a founding member of, has renamed itself the Biodiversity Collections Network (BCON). The name change came as a result of discussions with the biocollections community during which it became clear that the NIBA RCN name did not adequately reflect the goals and objectives of the initiative.

Despite the name change, the goals and objectives of the project remain the same – to foster the development of a sustainable community able to advance the long-term goals articulated in the Strategic and Implementation Plans for the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance.

The Biodiversity Collections Network has established a fresh web presence at www.bcon.aibs.org. The initiative may also be engaged via Twitter @BioCollNetwork or on LinkedIn via the Biodiversity Collections Network group.

NSC Alliance Provides Testimony on Interior Appropriations

In testimony submitted to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, NSC Alliance voiced support for funding for scientific collections at the Department of the Interior. Interior proposes to increase funding by \$1.0 million for collections management in fiscal year 2016. Additionally, the U.S. Geological Survey and National Park Service would maintain efforts to make natural history collections and associated data accessible.

Read NSCA's testimony at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=818>.

House Passes COMPETES Act with Some Amendments

A bill to reauthorize the National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Energy Office of Science, and laboratories at the National Institute of Standards and Technology passed the House of Representatives with only the support of Republican lawmakers. The final vote was 217 to

205. All members of the Democratic Caucus who were present along with twenty-three Republicans voted against H.R. 1806.

Representative Lamar Smith (R-TX), the sponsor of the bill and Chairman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, presented the bill as a “pro-science, fiscally responsible bill.” He stated “Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle would have you believe that the only way you can be pro-science is to spend more taxpayer money than the Budget Control Act allows. Real priorities require making choices. H.R. 1806 proves that we can set priorities, make tough choices and still invest more in breakthrough research and innovation.”

H.R. 1806 would increase the total NSF funding authorization, but make deep cuts to social science and geosciences research.

Twelve amendments to the “America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015” were debated, several of which were adopted.

An amendment offered by Representative Smith restored proposed cuts to the EPSCoR program and Graduate Research Fellowship. The increased funding came at the expense of research funding for the Biological Sciences, Engineering, and Computer and Information Science and Engineering directorates. Other amendments that were made to the legislation include encouraging female entrepreneurs, a program to incorporate robotics in K-12 education, and science education grants for Hispanic serving institutions.

An effort by Representative Bill Foster (D-IL) to strip a requirement that NSF funding be in the “national interest” failed. Foster is a physicist and one of only three Ph.D. scientists in Congress. The amendment was opposed by fellow Democrat Dan Lipinski (D-IL), who holds a Ph.D. in political science. Lipinski stated that the section was supported by NSF Director France Cordova and was the result of bipartisan negotiations.

The White House has threatened to veto the bill. “The Administration believes that H.R. 1806 would be damaging to the Administration's actions to move American competitiveness, innovation, and job growth forward through a world-leading science, technology, and innovation enterprise.”

House Appropriations Committee Passes Bill to Modestly Boost NSF Funding, Makes Major Cuts to Geo and Social Sciences

On May 20th, the House Appropriations Committee passed a bill that would provide \$7.4 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fiscal year 2016. The \$50 million increase proposed for the agency is entirely directed to the Research and Related Activities account.

The proposed funding is \$329 million less than President Obama requested. According to the White House, this bill would support about 600 fewer research grants than the President’s spending plan.

The report accompanying the House spending plan includes a clause stipulating that at least 70 percent of research funding be provided to four of the nine programs within Research and Related Activities. The beneficiaries would be Biological Sciences, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Engineering, and Computer and Information Science and Engineering. Because three other research programs are to be supported at no less than the FY 2015 level, this means that the social science and geoscience directorates would have to be cut by over \$250 million.

The Advancing Informal STEM Learning program would receive \$65 million, a \$10 million increase, which is more than the Administration requested.

Although the “America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015” has not been enacted into law, it is already influencing science policy.

The report accompanying the spending legislation states that “The Committee supports section 106 of the American COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015, H.R. 1806, as reported, that enhances transparency and accountability of NSF grants by requiring that public award abstracts articulate how the projects serve the national interest...NSF is directed to comply with section 106 and provide periodic updates to the Committee on its transparency activities.”

Section 106 requires that new NSF research grants be “in the national interest.” This could be fulfilled through enhanced economic competitiveness, advancement of health and welfare of Americans, development of a globally competitive workforce, increased public scientific literacy, more partnerships between academia and industry, support for national defense, or promotion of scientific progress. NSF would have to provide written justification for each award it makes.

National Fossil Day is Coming

The National Park Service is planning for the sixth annual celebration of National Fossil Day, which will take place on 14 October 2015. National Fossil Day is a nationwide celebration that will include paleontology activities planned by more than 300 partner organizations.

NSC Alliance has once again partnered with the National Park Service to promote the event.

To become a partner organization in this effort visit
<http://nature.nps.gov/geology/nationalfossilday/partners.cfm>.

IPBES Seeks Nominations for New Fellowship

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is seeking nominations of young scientists for a new fellowship. The program will offer the opportunity for fellows to gain an understanding of the assessments process on land degradation and restoration.

Nominations are due by 31 May. Learn more at <http://www.ipbes.net/news/660-nomination-fellows.html>.

NSC Alliance Board of Directors Meeting

The NSC Alliance Board of Directors met on 18 March 2015 in Gainesville, Florida. The majority of the Board meeting was a continuation of the December Board meeting, when the Board initiated a strategic planning process.

All NSC Alliance member representatives are encouraged to learn more about the process by contacting a member of the Board or Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org. Ideas and suggestions about how the organization can continue to work with its members to advance the interests of the natural science collections community are welcomed.

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.