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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 Opposes Illinois Governor's Proposal to Close State Museum

The Illinois State Museum system is under threat of being shut down because of a looming state budget deficit. Illinois faces a \$3-4 billion shortfall in the new fiscal year, which begins July 1. Governor Bruce Rauner has proposed a package of cuts, including closing the museum, which would save \$4.8 million next year.

The Illinois State Museum system includes five locations and curates 12.5 million natural history and cultural objects. The museum is a member of NSC Alliance.

Chris Young, the spokesman for the Department of Natural Resources, told the State Journal-Register: "The museum will return art objects owned by other entities that currently are on display. Consigned Illinois artisan works also will be returned, as well as scientific collections from other museums and universities that have been borrowed for research purposes. The museum's staff will also be calling back artifacts and specimens that are on loan to other entities for research and exhibition. At this time, there is no definitive list of objects or collections to be returned. Closure will come after the museum's professional staff has adequate time to ensure that collections are properly accounted for and stored."

NSC Alliance sent a letter to Governor Rauner expressing concerns about the proposed closure. The letter encouraged the Governor to find other ways to close the budget shortfall.

Reminder: Sign Up to Host Your Lawmaker

Registration is still open for the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. NSC Alliance member organizations are encouraged to participate and to host a tour of their natural history collection for their U.S. Representative or state legislator.

The tour can take place at your convenience this summer or fall. Scheduling and participant training will be handled by the American Institute of Biological Sciences and Natural Science Collections Alliance, which is a sponsor of this important national initiative.

To register, visit http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

Collections in Support of Biological Research Solicitation

The new program solicitation for the Collections in Support of Biological Research program at the National Science Foundation (NSF) is now available. The program provides funds for improvements to secure and organize collections that are significant to the NSF BIO-funded research community; to secure collections-related data for sustained, accurate, and efficient accessibility to the biological research community; and to transfer ownership of collections.

Read the program solicitation at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15577/nsf15577.htm>. Proposals are due 10 September 2015.

Request for Proposals for Digitization of Collections

The National Science Foundation has released the newest solicitation for proposals for the Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections program. The program aims to enhance and expand digital data documenting existing vouchered biological and paleontological collections and to advance scientific knowledge by improving access to digitized information residing in vouchered scientific collections across the United States.

Proposals are due by 9 October 2015. Learn more at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15576/nsf15576.htm>.

Brazil Adopts New Law on Accessing Biodiversity

Scientists interested in conducting biodiversity studies in Brazil should soon have an easier time securing permission to conduct their research. The country adopted a new law that supersedes onerous regulations in place since 2001.

Under the new law, Brazilian researchers will have to register their work in a database, but will no longer have to seek permission from the Genetic Heritage Management Council. Foreign scientists are still not able to bioprospect, except if they partner with a Brazilian company or institution.

Another change relates to the rules regarding the shipment of specimens abroad, which were previously banned unless the shipment was granted a permit. The new law simply requires a record of the shipment being entered in a registry.

Opportunity to Present at NAGPRA Meeting

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Review Committee is soliciting presentations from museums, Indian tribes, and Federal agencies on the progress made, and any barriers encountered, in implementing the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and (2) the outcomes of disputes reviewed by the Review Committee relating to the return of items.

The presentations will be part of the committee's meeting on 18-19 November 2015 in Norman, Oklahoma.

A presentation request must, at minimum, include an abstract of the presentation and contact information for the presenter(s). Presentation requests and materials must be received by 14 October 2015. Written comments will be accepted from any party and provided to the Review Committee.

For more information, visit <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-06-15/html/2015-14551.htm>.

NSC Alliance Makes Nomination for NAGPRA Review Committee

The NSC Alliance nominated Cissy Farm to serve another term on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee. Ms. Farm is a lawyer who has represented the Bishop Museum in Hawaii on a variety of NAGPRA issues. She has served on the committee since 2011.

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest

The 5th Annual Faces of Biology Photo Contest is now open for submissions. The competition, sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), recognizes scientists who use imagery to communicate aspects of biological research to the public and policymakers.

The theme of the contest is "Faces of Biology." Photographs entered into the competition must depict a person, such as a scientist, technician, or student, engaging in biological research. The

research may occur outside, in a lab, at a natural history collection, at a field station, on a computer, in a classroom, or anywhere else research is done.

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 BioScience. The Second and Third Place Winners will have his/her winning photo printed inside the journal, and will receive a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to BioScience.

The winning photo from the 2014 contest is featured on the cover of the May 2015 issue of BioScience.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 30 September 2015.

For more information or 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.