

In this Issue:

- Lawmakers Tour Research Facilities as Part of 7th Annual Event
 - Representatives Receive USGS Coalition Leadership Award
 - NSF Announces Solicitation for Dimensions of Biodiversity Program
 - IMLS Announces Funding Opportunities
 - GBIF Task Force on Accelerating the Discovery of Biocollections Data Survey
 - LA Times Spotlights UC Berkeley's Campanile Fossil Collection
-

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.

Lawmakers Tour Research Facilities as Part of 7th Annual Event

Dozens of scientists met with their lawmakers as part of the 7th *Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits* event. This national initiative encourages scientists across the nation to showcase for federal and state lawmakers the people, facilities, and equipment required to conduct scientific research. The Natural Science Collections Alliance sponsored the event.

“Funding for research and research infrastructure, which includes the people doing the research, are active topics of debate for lawmakers around the nation,” said Dr. Robert Gropp, Interim Co-Executive Director of the American Institute of Biological Science, the event’s organizer. “The science community needs to inform these deliberations. Sadly, we see in Illinois an example of what can happen when politics take over. The Illinois State Museum is a recent casualty of a political impasse and an inability to properly fund government functions.”

This nationwide event enables scientists to meet with their elected officials in their local area rather than in Washington, DC or the state capital. Lawmakers are able to learn first-hand about the scientific assets and research facilities in their district. Participants ranged from graduate students to senior researchers.

“I believe that communicating science to the public and to policymakers is a vital part of the scientific process. As someone trained in science and research, I think I can help inform policymaker’s decisions with my expertise,” said Nichole Bennett, a Ph.D. student at the

University of Texas at Austin. Bennett met with staff for U.S. Representative Roger Williams (R-TX).

Another group of graduate students from Saint Louis University hosted a tour of research facilities at the Missouri Botanical Garden for their state senator.

Dr. Janice Voltzow, a biology professor at The University of Scranton, hosted a tour of a new university science building for Pennsylvania state Senator John Blake. “I am not usually very actively engaged politically but have come to appreciate that it is our responsibility as scientists to help elected officials understand the significance of climate change and to make ourselves available as resources to them.”

Participants in the event were prepared for their meetings during an interactive training webinar. The program provided information about how best to communicate science to non-technical audiences, tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official, and information about trends in funding for research.

More information about the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event is available at www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressionaldistrictvisits.html.

Representatives Receive USGS Coalition Leadership Award

On 29 September, the USGS Coalition honored Representatives Tom Cole (R-OK) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) with the 2015 USGS Coalition Leadership Award. NSC Alliance is a member of the coalition.

“The USGS Coalition is pleased to recognize Representatives Cole and Bonamici for their efforts to advance the scientific fields that further our understanding of Earth’s living and nonliving systems,” said Robert Gropp, chairman of the USGS Coalition and Interim Co-Executive Director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences. “The U.S. Geological Survey plays an important role in improving public safety and informing natural resource management. The biological, geological, geographic and hydrologic research the USGS conducts improves the quality of life of every American, every day.”

Congressman Cole is serving his seventh term in the U.S. House of Representatives and represents Oklahoma’s 4th Congressional District. He serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, which oversees funding for the Department of the Interior. As a member of the subcommittee, Cole plays an important role in ensuring that the USGS has the resources it needs to provide the department and the nation with the scientific information required to make informed decisions.

Representative Bonamici is serving her third term in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Oregon’s 1st Congressional District. She serves as the ranking member on the House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittee on Environment. Bonamici has advocated

for the development of an earthquake early warning system by USGS. She is also the sponsor of legislation to reauthorize the nation's tsunami warning system and to address marine debris.

NSF Announces Solicitation for Dimensions of Biodiversity Program

The National Science Foundation has released a program solicitation for the Dimensions of Biodiversity program. The agency anticipates awarding at least \$16 million in fiscal year 2016.

The Dimensions of Biodiversity program aims to transform “how we describe and understand the scope and role of life on Earth.”

Research awards are for up to 5 years in duration and up to \$2 million.

Proposals are due by 3 April 2014. For more information, see the program solicitation at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2015/nsf15611/nsf15611.htm?>

IMLS Announces Funding Opportunities

The Institute of Museum and Library Services has published a guide to fiscal year 2016 funding. Grants are available to museums through several programs:

- Museums for America: \$5,000 to \$150,000 per grant for activities that strengthen museums as active resources for lifelong learning, vital components of livable communities, and good stewards of the nation's collections.
- National Leadership Grants for Museums: \$50,000 to \$500,000 per grant for projects that address challenges or needs of the museum field, have broad impact, and demonstrate innovation and collaboration.
- Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums: \$10,000 to \$25,000 per grant for opportunities to expand and test the boundaries of museum services and practices.

Read the funding guide at

<https://www.ims.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/2016OMSGrantOpps4pager.pdf>.

GBIF Task Force on Accelerating the Discovery of Biocollections Data Survey

The GBIF Task Force on Accelerating the Discovery of Biocollections Data is conducting a survey on digitization of biocollections. The purpose of the survey is to collect data to enable the task force to determine and demonstrate (1) the digital readiness of the world's biocollections and their institutions; (2) the benefits to the collection/institution that digitization engenders; and (3) the impediments to collection data digitization.

If you are an administrator, curator, or data, information or collection manager of a natural history collection, please take the survey at https://ufl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_byg2mgbtYdeF3bT.

LA Times Spotlights UC Berkeley's Campanile Fossil Collection

On 9 September, the Los Angeles Times' Amina Khan wrote a feature highlighting the rediscovery and revitalization of the Campanile fossil collection at the University of California at Berkeley. Tucked away in one of the oldest buildings on campus, the collection of fossils from the McKittrick and La Brea tar pits was half-forgotten for many years. The Campanile, also known as Sather Tower, is celebrating its hundred-year anniversary, and houses around 300,000 fossils including giant sloths, cave bears, and petrified wood.

While study of these fossils was sidelined for a long time, new advances and approaches to paleontology and new interests such as the effects of climate changes on the animal populations have resulted in dusting off, literally and figuratively, this collection. Neglect has damaged some of the specimens, and current grants are only enough to begin restoration and curation of part of the collection. However, the newfound purpose researchers have found for this half-forgotten collection serves as an important reminder of the necessity of maintaining and properly cataloging aging and sidelined collections for future scientific endeavors.

The full LA Times article can be found at <http://www.latimes.com/science/great-reads/la-sci-c1-belltower-bones-20150909-story.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.