

In this Issue:

- University of Louisiana at Monroe Collections Find New Homes
 - Congress Rejects Some of Trump's Deep Cuts to Science, But Budget Outlook is Not Rosy
 - Legislation Introduced to Protect Cultural Objects
 - EPA Continues to Remove Scientists from Advisory Boards
 - NSC Alliance Members Invited to Engage Lawmakers This Summer
 - Enter the 2017 Faces of Biology Photo Contest
-

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.

University of Louisiana at Monroe Collections Find New Homes

Four universities in the southeastern United States have stepped forward to house natural history collections from the University of Louisiana at Monroe. The university had previously threatened to destroy more than 80,000 jars of scientific specimens and 450,000 plant specimens if new homes could not be located.

“[T]he specimens will remain available to researchers nationwide as they will be housed in institutions that can preserve their scientific worth. None of the specimens will be destroyed,” said Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael A. Camille.

University of Louisiana at Monroe administrators reached out to 32 other universities, 18 of which submitted proposals to receive one or more of the collections. A team of museum curators and administrators from the university evaluated the proposals.

The fish collection is heading to a consortium of institutions lead by Tulane University. The University of Texas at Arlington will take the reptile and amphibian collection. The insect collection is going to Mississippi State University. The Botanical Research Institute of Texas in Ft. Worth will house the botanical collection.

The specimens had been stored in an athletic facility, which is scheduled for an expansion in mid-July. That construction project necessitated the removal of the specimens.

The transfer of the specimens will likely be completed in August.

Congress Rejects Some of Trump's Deep Cuts to Science, But Budget Outlook is Not Rosy

Congress has begun to move some of the 12 spending bills that will fund the federal government in fiscal year (FY) 2018. Notably, billions of dollars in cuts to science programs proposed by President Trump were rejected by House Republicans, although many research programs are still facing cuts relative to FY 2017 funding levels.

Representatives are trying to fund the National Science Foundation at \$7.3 billion, a reduction of \$133 million but \$687 million more than the President's budget request. Research and Related Activities, which includes the Biological Sciences Directorate, would remain at the current funding level. A 10 percent cut to the BIO directorate had been previously proposed.

Within the Department of Agriculture, intramural agricultural research and facilities would be cut by 6 percent, which is significant but less damaging than the 20 percent cut sought by President Trump. Extramural research would be cut by less than 1 percent. Representatives rejected the administration's request to close 17 agricultural research facilities.

The Department of Energy Office of Science would receive \$5.4 billion, the same amount as in FY 2017. President Trump had requested a 17 percent cut to the program.

The House energy appropriations bill eliminates funding for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), as was requested by the White House. The program received about \$300 million this year to fund experimental energy research.

House Appropriations Energy Subcommittee Chairman Mike Simpson (R-ID) said that the decision to end ARPA-E came from objections from the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. "I like ARPA-E, but the reality is our Science Committee doesn't like it, wants to put the money into basic science. And with this [budget] allocation, we've got to make some tough decisions," he said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would be funded at \$5 billion, a cut of \$710 million from the FY 2017 enacted level. Lawmakers propose flat funding the National Sea Grant College Program, which supports research, education, and extension at 33 universities; the program was proposed for elimination by the White House.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration would see a 1 percent increase for science, however earth science research would lose 11 percent.

Instead of the 13 percent reduction requested by President Trump, the National Institute of Standards and Technology faces a 4 percent cut.

So far, House subcommittees have passed seven appropriations bills; the remaining bills will likely be revealed this month. The Senate has not yet moved any spending bills.

Legislation Introduced to Protect Cultural Objects

Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) has reintroduced legislation to prohibit the export of cultural objects and human remains obtained in violation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The “Safeguarding Tribal Objects of Patrimony Act,” or “STOP Act,” would also increase the criminal penalties for violations of NAGPRA.

“We all recognize the incredible beauty of American Indian art — from the remnants of ancient wonders that we can explore and admire in places like Chaco Canyon and the Gila Cliff Dwellings to the traditional and modern art masterpieces created by Native artists to this day,” Heinrich said in a statement. “But we can also recognize a clear difference between supporting tribal artists or collecting artifacts ethically and legally as opposed to dealing or exporting items that tribes have identified as essential and sacred pieces of their cultural heritage.”

S. 1400 is co-sponsored by Senators Steve Daines (R-MT), Jeff Flake (R-AZ), John McCain (R-AZ), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Jon Tester (D-MT), and Tom Udall (D-NM).

Heinrich introduced a similar bill in the last session of Congress, but it did not advance out of committee.

EPA Continues to Remove Scientists from Advisory Boards

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is letting the appointments of 38 additional scientists expire from the Board of Scientific Counselors. The board members’ three-year terms will expire in August.

This is the [second wave](#) of scientific advisors whose terms the agency will not renew. In total, 47 appointments were not renewed, leaving only 11 current members on the board.

In addition, all meetings of the board and its five subcommittees have been suspended. Robert Kavlock, acting director of EPA’s Office of Research and Development wrote in an email that they are “hopeful” that the board can resume its work in 2018.

NSC Alliance Members Invited to Engage Lawmakers This Summer

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is pleased to announce that Alliance members are eligible to participate in the 2017 Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event.

This national initiative is an opportunity for scientists across the country to meet with their federal or state elected officials to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

There is a pressing need for the scientific community to engage with policymakers about the value of natural history collections in research and education. As called for in the recent report from the Biodiversity Collections Network, “The community must do a better job of communicating outcomes and benefits of digitization efforts to policymakers, administrators, other scientists, and the public.”

The Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event enables scientists, curators, museum professionals, and graduate students to meet with their elected officials without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite an elected official to tour their research facility or can meet at the lawmaker’s local office. Meetings will take place mid-July through October, depending on the participant’s schedule.

NSC Alliance members who participate will receive one-on-one support and online training to prepare them for their tour or meeting.

The event is open to all types of natural science collections, including biological, geological, and anthropological collections.

Participation is free for NSC Alliance member organizations, but registration will close on July 18, 2017. To register, visit https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

Enter the 2017 Faces of Biology Photo Contest

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest for your chance to win \$250 and to have your photo appear on the cover of the journal *BioScience*.

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 2016 contest was featured on the cover of the April 2017 issue of *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 1 October 2017.

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.