

In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance Congressional Testimony Calls for Increased FY 2019 Science Funding
- White House Rescissions Proposal Could Cut Funding from Current Levels
- Former NSC Alliance President Urges Congress to Fund IMLS
- Lawmakers Ask Interior to Investigate Scientific Integrity at NPS
- President's USGS, DOE, EPA Nominees Confirmed
- OMB Releases President's Management Agenda
- NSC Alliance Board Meeting Announced
- Stay Up-to-Date on Biodiversity Collections: BCoN 2018 Webinar Series
- Increase Your Career Opportunities and Your Impact: 2018 AIBS Writing for Impact and Influence Course

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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 <http://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](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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### **NSC Alliance Congressional Testimony Calls for Increased FY 2019 Science Funding**

The Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) has provided testimony to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees regarding fiscal year (FY) 2019 funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF).

“Natural science collections advance research that improves public health, agriculture, natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and American innovation. Current research involving natural science collections also contributes to the development of new cyberinfrastructure, data visualization tools, and improved data management.”

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is a key federal supporter of scientific collections. NSF supports research that uses existing collections as well as studies that gather new natural history specimens. NSF's Directorates for Biological Sciences (BIO) and Geosciences (GEO) support research and student training opportunities in natural history collections. NSF also supports biological research infrastructure, such as natural history museums, living stock collections, and field stations.

The testimony called for \$8.45 billion for NSF in fiscal year 2019. Read the testimony [here](#).

### **White House Proposal Could Cut Funding from Current Levels**

The White House is expected to send a proposal to Congress, potentially drawing funding cuts, known as rescissions, from the recently approved omnibus spending package for fiscal year (FY) 2018.

The White House plan is based on a 1974 budget law that allows the President to propose rescissions, which then need to be approved by Congress within 45 days. In its FY 2018 budget request, the Trump Administration had proposed deep cuts to several agencies, which were rejected in the final FY 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Act. The President had expressed opposition to increased domestic spending and had initially threatened to veto the bill before finally signing it into law. The rescissions proposal could be seen as a way to reverse some of those increases.

The proposal has received skepticism from several lawmakers. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) said, "If we reach agreement, we ought to honor it. That's the way I always believed." Shelby believes that it would be difficult to get the proposal approved by the committee but did not rule out some cuts. Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-TX) also expressed doubts about the proposal advancing in the Senate but added, "Obviously, we ended up spending more money than many Republicans, including me, were happy with, but that was the price of getting the defense spending number at an acceptable level. I think it's worth talking about, but the devil is going to be in the details."

Other Republican lawmakers like Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Chairman of the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, as well as Democratic lawmakers are also wary of the Administration's effort to reverse spending. Democrats are also worried about the prospect of the rescissions package causing agencies to put plans on hold until the matter is resolved.

According to Representative Tom Cole (R-OK), who discussed the proposal with Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, \$25 billion is likely to be the "ceiling" for any package. Cole indicated that the package could take money from unobligated funds, which is money that agencies did not spend in the past. But if it draws cuts from the new spending package, the move could cause delays in and undermine bipartisan negotiations for next year's appropriations.

The rescissions proposal is being pushed by Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) to placate conservatives opposed to the recent budget deal and possibly to help his expected bid to take over as the next House Speaker.

The White House also sought \$14 billion in rescissions last year in a bid to pay for emergency hurricane relief, with the proposal taking unallocated funds from a Department of Energy Program. Another proposal requested \$1 billion in rescissions related to Superstorm Sandy. However, these proposals were ignored by Congress.

## **Former NSC Alliance President Urges Congress to Fund IMLS**

Michael Mares, director of the Sam Noble Museum at the University of Oklahoma and former President of the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) recently appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies to argue for funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Office of Museum Services (OMS).

Mares urged Congress to provide at least \$38.6 million to the OMS in fiscal year 2019. “This small program is a vital investment in protecting our nation’s cultural treasures, educating students and lifelong learners, and bolstering local economies around the country,” he stressed. He added, “IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports museums, and OMS awards grants in every state to help museums digitize, enhance and preserve collections; provide teacher professional development; and create innovative, cross-cultural and multidisciplinary programs and exhibits for schools and the public.”

## **Lawmakers Ask Interior to Investigate Scientific Integrity at NPS**

Democratic lawmakers from the House and Senate have sent letters to the Deputy Inspector General of the Interior Department, Mary Kendall, requesting an investigation into the “effectiveness of scientific integrity policy” at the National Park Service (NPS).

According to a [report](#) from Reveal, a nonprofit investigative journalism organization, NPS officials have removed any mention of the human role in climate change from drafts of a report on sea-level rise and storm surge. An analysis of eighteen different versions of the scientific report revealed that the word “anthropogenic” and references to “human-activities” were crossed out.

The NPS report, written by a scientist at the University of Colorado at Boulder, describes research that projects risks from rising sea-levels at coastal national park sites and is intended to inform park officials as well as the public on ways to protect park resources and visitors from the impacts of climate change. The long-awaited report is not yet published and has been held up for ten months.

Many scientists have criticized the move as a violation of an NPS policy to protect science from political influence. Joel Clement, a former Department of the Interior official under the Obama Administration, called the NPS report “probably the biggest scientific integrity violation at the Department of Interior, by far ... because this is an actual scientific report.”

Interior Secretary, Ryan Zinke, had vowed earlier to Congress that the department will not be censoring science. At a Senate hearing last month, he testified, “There is no incident, no incident at all that I know that we ever changed a comma on a document itself. Now we may have on a

press release... And I challenge you, any member, to find a document that we've actually changed on a report.”

Lawmakers have urged the Inspector General to investigate if “the changes were made in response to explicit verbal or written direction or whether they were a result of a culture of climate denial.” The House [letter](#) was signed by Representatives Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee, Donald McEachin (D-VA), Donald Beyer (D-VA), Niki Tsongas (D-MA), and Alan Lowenthal (D-CA). The Senate letter was signed by Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV).

### **President’s USGS, DOE, EPA Nominees Confirmed**

On April 12, 2018, the Senate confirmed Andrew Wheeler as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Deputy Administrator. Wheeler, a former energy lobbyist, has previously served as a Republican aide to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Republican Senators unanimously voted for Wheeler. Democrats, who questioned Wheeler’s qualifications at his hearing, were expected to block his confirmation. However, moderate Democratic Senators opted to vote for his confirmation.

President Trump’s nominee to lead the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Dr. James Reilly, was confirmed by the Senate on 9 April along with two Department of Energy (DOE) nominees. Reilly, a former National Aeronautics and Space Administration astronaut and exploration geologist, had support from both sides of the aisle. He vowed at his confirmation hearing to not let politics obstruct scientific integrity.

Theodore Garrish, who has previously served as a special assistant to the Secretary and General Counsel at DOE, was confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Energy for International Affairs. James Campos, who previously served as a Senior Adviser to the President of Nevada State College and a board member of the Nevada Taxicab authority, was confirmed as head of DOE’s Office of Economic Impact and Diversity.

### **OMB Releases President’s Management Agenda**

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released the President’s Management Agenda on March 20, 2018. The [Agenda](#) provides a broad framework to improve the federal government’s efficiency through modernization in key areas and is expected to guide agency reorganization plans that are supposed to become available in coming months.

The Agenda defines a long-term plan that incorporates goals of successfully accomplishing missions, providing better services to Americans, and effectively managing taxpayer dollars. The plan describes “three key drivers of transformation” that the Administration will focus on to achieve modernization. These include, information technology modernization across the

government, data accountability and transparency to hold agencies accountable for tax dollars, and developing a modern federal workforce.

The Agenda establishes “Cross-Agency Priority” or CAP goals for each key area to be led by an interagency team of senior federal staff. Progress on these CAP goals can be tracked online on a quarterly basis at [www.performance.gov/PMA](http://www.performance.gov/PMA).

### **NSC Alliance Board Meeting Announced**

The next meeting of the NSC Alliance Board of Directors will be held on June 15, 2018. NSC Alliance members interested in learning more about the meeting or in offering agenda items for the Board should contact NSC Alliance President Dr. John Bates.

### **Stay Up-to-Date on Biodiversity Collections: BCoN 2018 Webinar Series**

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) will convene a series of webinar programs in 2018 to share information about BCoN activities with the community and to receive community input on prior and pending BCoN programs. These webinars will include a formal presentation followed by an opportunity for participants to ask questions and share information. All programs will be recorded and posted to the BCoN website.

The next program will be on May 23 and will focus on a recent BCoN workshop on data integration and attribution.

Click [here](#) for more information regarding the webinar series and to register.

### **Increase Your Career Opportunities and Your Impact: 2018 AIBS Writing for Impact and Influence Course**

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) is offering a professional development program to help scientists and students hone their written communication skills to increase the power of their message.

*Writing for Impact and Influence* combines practical instruction and hands-on exercises to improve participants' general writing proficiency and their ability to reach large audiences. The program will provide participants with the skills and tools needed to compose scientific press releases, blog posts, emails, and memoranda.

Learn to write for stakeholders, decision-makers, and the general public, with a focus on perfecting the reader experience.

The course consists of six 90-minute online modules conducted live and will begin on Thursday, June 7, 2018, with subsequent course sessions held weekly on Thursdays (except July 5).

Individuals who actively participate in and complete the full course will receive a certificate recognizing that they have completed a nine-hour professional development course on business writing for scientists.

Register now: <http://io.aibs.org/writing>

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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](http://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 [dbosnjak@aibs.org](mailto:dbosnjak@aibs.org).