

In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance Joins International Statement on Digital Sequence Information
- Senate Advances Science and Interior Spending Bills
- NSB Recommends Flexible Research Infrastructure Account for NSF
- Top 10 Newly Discovered Species Announced
- Inform Science Policy this Summer
- Stay Up-to-Date on Biodiversity Collections: BCoN 2018 Webinar Series

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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 Joins International Statement on Digital Sequence Information**

The NSC Alliance recently joined with more than 50 other organizations from around the world to express a shared concern with emerging proposals on the regulation of use of digital sequence information. The full statement is available on the NSC Alliance website at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=1055>.

The statement was issued in response to “activities pursuant to the decisions at the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB) (Decision XIII/16) and the Nagoya Protocol (NP) (Decision NP-2/14) to “*consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources for the first three objectives of the CBD and the objective of the NP*”.”

The joint statement reads, in part, “As key stakeholders, the signatory organizations are vigilant about the potentially harmful effect of inappropriate or overly burdensome regulation of genetic resources. They are therefore greatly concerned about proposals to apply ABS obligations to DSI. Such obligations would place additional hurdles on biological research – with potentially negative consequences for the advancement of science and the huge societal value this generates, as well as for achieving the three objectives of the CBD.”

### **Senate Advances Science and Interior Spending bills**

The Senate Appropriations Committee has cleared a fiscal year (FY) 2019 spending bill that would fund the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The measure would provide overall increased spending for NSF and NASA but is less generous than the House version of the bill.

Under the Senate plan, the NSF would receive \$8.069 billion, four percent more than the funding levels for FY 2018 and \$600 more than the President's request. However, this is \$106 million below the level approved by the House Appropriations Committee. Research and Related Activities (RRA), which includes the accounts for the Biological Sciences and Geosciences Directorates, would receive \$6.3 billion, an increase of \$222 million above FY 2018. The House bill would raise the RRA budget by \$317 million. On the other hand, NSF's Education account, which would remain flat under the House bill, would receive \$900 million (+\$13 million) under the Senate bill.

The Senate spending bill for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies would provide \$5.48 billion for NOAA, a decrease of \$426 million below the FY 2018 enacted level. The plan includes funding for NOAA's grant programs, such as the sea grant, marine aquaculture programs, and coastal zone management and resilience grants. Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, which includes climate change research, would receive \$508 million, rejecting the 40 percent cut to the program proposed by the President. The House has proposed \$5.2 billion in funding for NOAA.

The Senate plan shows support for NASA, by providing \$21.3 billion; a \$587 million bump over the FY 2018 enacted level and \$1.43 billion above the President's request. The Senate bill would provide \$6.4 billion (+\$ 179 million) to NASA's Science account, compared to \$6.7 billion under the House bill. The proposal also includes \$10 million for the Carbon Monitoring System, a program that the Trump Administration has proposed to eliminate.

Senate Appropriators also approved the spending bill for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies on June 14. The bill would provide the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) flat funding at \$8.05 billion in FY 2019, \$100 million more than the amount proposed by House Appropriators. The current Senate bill rejects the Administration's request for funding for employee buyouts to continue the agency's workforce reshaping efforts, a measure that was supported in the House bill. The Senate plan includes language that bars the use of agency funds to breach federal ethics requirements in response to the growing number of ethics investigations into EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

The Interior Department would receive \$13.1 billion overall, with flat funding of \$1.15 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The bill would provide \$1.3 billion (+\$11 million) for the Bureau of Land Management, \$3.2 billion (+13.4 million) for the National Park Service, \$1.6 billion (-\$19.7 million) for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, \$6.29 billion for the U.S. Forest Service, and \$1.043 billion (flat) for the Smithsonian Institution.

On the House side, lawmakers approved the first three spending bills, packaged as a “minibus”, including Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veteran Affairs on June 8, 2018. The Energy and Water spending package would provide \$6.6 billion to the Department of Energy Office of Science, \$341 million above FY 2018.

### **NSB Recommends Flexible Research Infrastructure Account for NSF**

The National Science Board (NSB) -- the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) governing body -- has released a new report titled “Study of Operations and Maintenance Costs for NSF Facilities,” which examines the balance between funding researchers and building, operating, and maintaining research facilities. The report was requested by the Senate Committee on Appropriations in light of growing budget constraints.

The NSB found that several factors influence grant success rates, and “the tendency to reduce it to a simple choice between Operation and Maintenance (O&M) costs and grants is misleading.” Peter Lepage, Chair of the NSB Committee on Awards and Facilities, said, “One of the surprises in our work was seeing that O&M outlays are not a huge driver of lower grant success rates.”

According to the report, the reason for the decline in success rates across NSF from 29 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2002 to 23 percent in FY 2017, was the fact that the NSF budget only increased by an average of 1.1 percent per year while the number of proposals submitted to the agency grew by over 40 percent. During this period, O&M outlays only increased by 3 percent. The report suggests that although O&M growth is not the primary cause of declining success rates across the agency, it is a crucial factor in “facility-heavy NSF divisions” like the Astronomical Sciences.

The report recommends that the NSB and the NSF Director “enhance agency-level ownership of the facility portfolio to elevate strategic and budgetary decisions and the agency’s Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction account (MREFC) should allow for greater flexibility.”

The NSF devoted 23.5 percent of its annual budget towards research infrastructure over the past 15-20 years, which is on the low end of the 22-27 percent range recommended by NSB in a 2003 report. Lepage stressed, “NSF can’t abandon its large facility pedigree if it wishes to remain a world leader in fundamental research.”

### **Top 10 Newly Discovered Species Announced**

The International Institute for Species Exploration (IISE) has released a list of the ten most interesting species discovered in the past year. The list, which has been compiled by IISE every year since 2008, is intended to highlight the extensive biodiversity that exists on the planet.

This 2018 list features a diverse set of organisms, including the Marsupial lion, the fossil for which was unearthed in Australia; volcanic bacteria, living on the sea bed off the coast of the

Canary Islands; and the Atlantic forest tree, a legume native to the Atlantic forest of Brazil that grows up to 130 feet, among others.

Find the complete list here: <http://www.esf.edu/top10/>

### **Inform Science Policy this Summer**

Registration is now open for the 2018 Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event.

This national initiative, organized by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), and co-sponsored by NSC Alliance, is an opportunity for scientists from 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 and education.

Now in its tenth year, the event enables scientists, graduate students, representatives of research facilities, and people affiliated with scientific collections to meet with their federal or state elected officials without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite their elected officials to visit their research facility or can meet at the policymaker's local office. AIBS works with participants to schedule the meetings with lawmakers and prepare participants through online training and one-on-one support.

“Participating in the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event was an invaluable experience to have as a graduate student,” said 2016 participant Erin Larson. “The training provided by AIBS made me feel confident and ready to go have a conversation with Representative Reed’s District Director about federal funding, especially how it’s benefitted me during my Ph.D. I was struck during our meeting by how meaningful it is to ‘show up’ and participate in the political process, especially as it relates to federal funding for the biological sciences. We scientists take the importance of federal funding to do our research to be a given, but it’s important for us to be able to communicate that effectively, especially with policymakers, to ensure that federal funding is maintained in the future.”

The event is made possible by AIBS, with the support of event sponsors Botanical Society of America, Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, Helminthological Society of Washington, Natural Science Collections Alliance, Paleontological Society, Society for the Study of Evolution, and Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

Participation is free, but registration is required. Registration will close on July 19, 2018. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional-district-visits.html>.

### **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 June 27 and will focus on addressing legal issues involved in digitized collections using the Nagoya Protocol as a test case.

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

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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).