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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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### **Lawmakers Introduce Legislation Regulating Invasive Species**

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Representative Elise Stefanik (R-NY) have introduced bicameral legislation, the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act of 2018, that would give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) greater authority to “regulate nonnative species and prohibit them from being imported or sold in the United States.”

Presently, more than 200 species have been listed as “injurious wildlife,” a designation given by the USFWS to species considered harmful to wildlife and natural resources in the United States. These species cannot be imported into the country or sold without a USFWS permit. However, under the current system, the designation is given only after a species has already been introduced.

The bipartisan legislation would address the invasive species threat before they are imported by establishing a new injurious species listing process based on scientific risk analysis. The bill would also give USFWS the power to make emergency designations for species that pose an “imminent threat.” The bill does not impose restrictions on the import of dead natural history museum specimens or scientific collections as long as the specimen is adequately preserved to minimize the risk of exposure from any harmful pathogens or parasites.

“Whether it’s Asian Carp in our lakes or the Emerald Ash Borer in our forests, invasive species threaten our environment and our economy, and we have to do everything we can to block them from coming into our state,” said Senator Gillibrand. “The Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act would help better protect our precious natural resources, strengthen our economy, draw tourism to our state, and provide clean drinking water to New Yorkers.”

Asian Carp is a prominent threat to the Great Lakes, which provide drinking water to over 30 million people and support a \$7 billion fishing industry and a \$15.5 billion boating industry. Ash trees across 31 states have been infested by the Emerald Ash Borer beetle resulting in negative ecological impacts.

Representative Stefanik said, “This important bill will give the Fish and Wildlife Service needed flexibility to regulate and combat invasive pests that threaten our region, and I urge my colleagues in the House to support it.”

### **Puerto Rico’s Legislature Rejects Plan to Dismantle Statistical Agency**

The Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics (PRIS), which the Governor had proposed to restructure, was spared during final negotiations on legislation to reorganize portions of Puerto Rico’s government.

PRIS is an independent agency that analyzes statistical data collected by other government agencies. It is run by an independent board of directors. The agency has many protections established by law to ensure impartial collection, production, and communication of statistical data. These firewalls would have been eliminated under the reorganization plan.

The rejected plan would have moved PRIS under Puerto Rico’s Department of Economic Development and Commerce, centralizing statistical data collection and then outsourcing statistical work to the private sector. Many scientific organizations were concerned that the reorganization would undermine the agency’s independence and transparency.

The provision restricting the agency was removed from the legislation after scientists, statisticians, and [politicians](#) across the United States opposed the plan. The American Institute of Biological Sciences was among 47 scientific organizations that sent a letter to the Governor of Puerto Rico Ricardo Rosselló in May urging him to keep PRIS “autonomous and independent.” Read the letter here: [http://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/POL-PRIS\\_Sign-OnLetter.pdf](http://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/POL-PRIS_Sign-OnLetter.pdf)

PRIS CEO Mario Marazzi-Santiago stated that he is committed to “sustaining an open dialogue about [PRIS’s] future ... so that it allows us to continue working to ensure that data collection and statistical systems, upon which public policies are based, are complete, trustworthy, and able to be accessed quickly and universally.”

PRIS has of late been under pressure from the government of Puerto Rico to discredit its work. Prior to the plan to move PRIS under the Department of Economic Development and Commerce, the Governor had attempted to fire four members of the agency’s Board of Directors without due

process, in order to interfere in the recruiting process of a new CEO, according to the Hill. Although the agency's current structure has been preserved for now, the Legislature has promised to "address issues related to the Institute of Statistics in a subsequent legislation."

### **Input Requested: Integrating Changes into Collections Databases, Challenges and Opportunities**

Participation is requested on two surveys on the challenge of integrating changes into collections databases. The purpose of these surveys is to gather information from the collections community regarding your experience incorporating changes into your local collections databases. The goal is to compile and share findings at [SPNHC-TDWG 2018](#) as part of the SPNHC symposium: Challenges for Implementing Collections Data Quality Feedback: synthesizing the community experience.

The surveys are interested in the skills, processes, and resources needed (or missing) when collections staff work to integrate data from aggregators and/or crowd-sourced transcriptions back into their local databases. The critical information collected in these surveys will be shared with the community to help current and future programs design and implement improved data integration and data quality efforts. Many changes might need to be integrated into collection databases.

The two surveys focus on:

- data quality feedback suggestions from aggregators, and
- information provided by crowdsourcing efforts (e.g., online transcription platforms)

Please take either questionnaire, or both, as is appropriate. Each survey is estimated to take a maximum of 5 to 10 minutes. Results will be shared at [SPNHC-TDWG 2018](#) and with you as well if you provide contact information.

Survey 1: Integrating Data Quality Feedback from Aggregators into Collection Databases  
[https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5dUvVJvj7aIv7MN](https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5dUvVJvj7aIv7MN)

Survey 2: Integrating Crowdsourced Data into Collection Databases  
[https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eD2jI32c4qhUx4F](https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eD2jI32c4qhUx4F)

### **Participate in Connecting to Collections Survey**

The Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation (FAIC) is developing a future plan for the future of the [Connecting to Collections Care program](#) and is seeking input on which collections care topics the collections community wants to learn more about. FAIC would also like to hear about how they can improve the site, forum, and webinars.

Take the 10-minute survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/C2C-5>.

Three survey respondents will receive free registration for a new Connecting to Collections Care course (a \$149 value), that will provide in-depth examination of collections care issues via a multi-webinar series.

### **Prepare Your Resume, Hone Your Interview Skills**

Registration is now open for the Employment Acquisition Skills Boot Camp for Scientists, a new professional development program by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS).

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduate programs in the United States do an excellent job of preparing students for careers in academia. As students and a growing number of reports note, however, many STEM graduate students are interested in employment in a variety of sectors by the time they complete their degree. Students continue to report that they feel ill-prepared and ill-equipped to pursue employment in these settings.

In response to this frustration heard from many graduate students, AIBS has developed a program to help scientists hone and practice the skills needed to secure employment. AIBS' Employment Acquisition Skills Boot Camp for Scientists is an intensive, two-day program that is a blend of lecture and hands-on exercises. Designed by scientists and a career coach, this program provides graduate students to senior scientists with the information, tools, and resources required to successfully identify and secure employment in a diversity of career pathways, including science policy, communications, program management, government, non-governmental organizations, international development, and others.

Course participants will:

- Identify career interests and opportunities;
- Learn to communicate their knowledge and skills to employers;
- Develop strategies for finding employment;
- Develop application materials;
- Prepare for and practice different interview styles and scenarios;
- Talk to scientists working in diverse employment settings and individuals responsible for making hiring decisions.

Current graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and scientists interested in transitioning to a new employment sector should consider signing up.

The program will be held in Washington, DC on December 17-18, 2018. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.aibs.org/events/employmentbootcamp.html>.

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

Registration is currently 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. For more information and to register, visit [https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional\\_district\\_visits.html](https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html).

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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).