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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.

White House Nominates Science Adviser

President Trump has nominated Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, a meteorologist and Vice President for Research at the University of Oklahoma, to be the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). If confirmed by the Senate, Dr. Droegemeier will serve as the President's chief science adviser.

The Director of OSTP advises the Administration on issues ranging from funding priorities to opportunities to improve policy coordination across federal departments and agencies. Historically, the head of OSTP has also played important roles in providing timely scientific input on matters related to public health, safety and security.

Droegemeier has expertise in extreme-weather forecasting and has led two National Science Foundation (NSF) funded centers, one focused on predicting storms and the other on adaptive atmospheric sensing. He has served on the National Science Board (NSB)—the governing body for the National Science Foundation—having been nominated by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Droegemeier has been a faculty member at the University of Oklahoma for 33 years. He also serves as the Secretary of Science and Technology for Governor Mary Fallin (R-OK) and has worked on weather and climate issues for former Governor Brad Henry (D-OK).

Droegemeier earned his Ph.D. in atmospheric science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In 2013, Droegemeier testified before the House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Environment that climate models “can be useful for determining future environments” and the potential for extreme storms. “Our understanding of, and ability to predict, high-impact weather will improve climate model representations of storms, precipitation, the radiation budget and even chemical processes,” he said.

Droegemeier co-authored an op-ed last year along with Daniel Reed, a former Vice President at Microsoft, warning about declining research spending in the United States. “U.S. government investment in basic research is now at a 40-year low as a percentage of [gross domestic product]. This places the ‘miracle machine’ in grave danger.”

The President’s nominee has received support from the scientific community. According to John Holdren, who served as OSTP Director under President Obama, Dr. Droegemeier is a “respected senior scientist and an experienced adviser on science policy to state and national leaders.” He said, “I expect he’ll be energetic in defending the R&D budget and climate change research in particular.”

The position of OSTP Director has been vacant for more than 18 months, a record length of time. During the Trump Administration, the number of OSTP staff has dropped from 135 under President Obama to 35 last year. The number has since grown to 60 under Acting Director Michael Kratsios.

Senate Approves Second Appropriations “Minibus”

The Senate has passed a second appropriations package for fiscal year (FY) 2019, including the funding for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies; Financial Services and General Government; Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies; and Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies.

This marked the first time since FY 2010 that the Senate debated and approved an Interior and Environment spending bill without considering it as a part of a year-end omnibus spending package. Lawmakers adopted 58 amendments before approving the “minibus” package, including one for expanding federal actions to address lead in drinking water and another for fighting algal blooms. An amendment to reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund was not adopted, despite receiving some bipartisan support.

The spending package will now go to conference with the House, which passed its version of the “minibus” earlier in July.

The Senate bill would provide the Department of Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other agencies \$35.9 billion, about \$600 million more than the House bill. EPA would receive flat funding at \$8.05 billion under the Senate bill, while the House bill would slash

its budget by 100 million. The U.S. Geological Survey will receive flat funding under the Senate bill and a slightly increased budget under the House bill.

Senate appropriators 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. Both bills have largely ignored the deep cuts proposed to the Department of Interior and EPA by the President.

The agriculture spending bill approved by Senate provides \$2.73 billion (-10 percent) to agricultural research, including \$1.301 billion (-\$42 million) for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), \$1.425 billion (+\$17 million) for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and \$405 million (+\$5 million) for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI).

The first “minibus” spending package, which provides funding for Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs was approved by both chambers in June and is expected to be ready for the President’s signature by early September. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) intends to “steer clear” of another year-end omnibus spending package and said that the Senate will be in session for most of August to work on appropriations. Appropriators have indicated that the next spending package they consider could potentially combine spending bills for Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, which account for 75 percent of all discretionary spending.

Comments Requested on Proposed Revisions to Endangered Species Regulations

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have released a joint proposal to make significant revisions to regulations that implement the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are inviting comments from the public for a period of 60 days.

ESA was enacted in 1973 with the goal of preventing plants and animals from becoming extinct. The Administration has proposed changes to the enforcement of ESA that would make it harder to provide protections for certain species.

The inter-agency proposal tightens the definition of “foreseeable future” for making crucial ESA decisions. This is in reference to the ESA requirement that USFWS or the National Marine Fisheries Service must determine whether a species is “in danger of extinction, or likely to become so within the foreseeable future” when making a listing decision. Under the new proposal, foreseeable future only extends so far as officials “can reasonably determine that the conditions posing the potential danger of extinction are probable.”

The proposal would also eliminate the “blanket 4(d)” rule, which allows the same broad protections for threatened species that are received by endangered species. This move, which would only cover future listings, would result in narrower protections, made on a case-by-case basis, for threatened species.

The Administration has also proposed removing language that guides officials to ignore economic burdens when determining how species should be protected. “We propose to remove the phrase, ‘without reference to possible economic or other impacts of such determination,’... to more closely align with the statutory language,” the proposed rule reads. “The act requires the secretary to make determinations based ‘solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data.’”

The proposal makes a key change to the designation of “critical habitats”, which are areas essential for recovery of a species. These areas are sometimes still considered “critical” when it is not occupied by the species in question. The new rules would allow USFWS and NOAA Fisheries to designate unoccupied areas “critical habitat” only when the occupied areas are inadequate for the conservation of the species or if inclusion of unoccupied areas would yield other specified advantages. This could potentially shrink critical habitat.

The proposal has raised concerns in the conservation community. Jamie Rappaport Clark, President and CEO of the Defenders of Wildlife and former Director of USFWS said, “These regulations are the heart of how the Endangered Species Act is implemented. Imperiled species depend on them for their very lives.” Clark expressed concerns that the changes “would undercut the effectiveness of the ESA and put species at risk of extinction.”

“These proposals would slam a wrecking ball into the most crucial protections for our most endangered wildlife,” said Brett Hartl, Government Affairs Director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “If these regulations had been in place in the 1970s, the bald eagle and the gray whale would be extinct today.”

The proposal, published in the Federal Register on July 25, 2018, will accept comments until September 24, 2018. Comments can be submitted electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Links to the Federal Register notices:

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-07-25/html/2018-15811.htm>

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-07-25/html/2018-15810.htm>

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-07-25/html/2018-15812.htm>

Collections in the News

According to a report from WESA, Pittsburgh’s NPR News Station, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History will begin digitizing its collection of plant specimens. About one third of the herbarium’s over 500,000 specimens will be scanned to high-resolution photographs and made available through a search engine, which contains data and images of plants from hundreds of collections across North America. The effort will focus on species collected in Pennsylvania and neighboring mid-Atlantic states. It is anticipated that this digitization work, made possible through a grant from the National Science Foundation, will improve accessibility to plant specimens and enable new research opportunities such as computational analysis.

New Report: Engaging Decisionmakers

The report, *Engaging Decision-makers: Opportunities for Biological Science Organizations*, from the 2017 meeting of the AIBS Council of Member Societies and Organizations is now available. The report explores issues around effectively communicating scientific knowledge to decision makers and identifies recommendations for action by the biological sciences community.

NSCA members are encouraged to review this document and its timely recommendations to consider how your organization could be addressing these calls to action.

A version of this document is also available as a Special Report in *BioScience*:
<https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/biy082/5056846>

BCoN 2018 Webinar Series: Archived Webinars on Biodiversity Collections Now Available

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) is convening 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 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.

Recordings of past webinars are available [here](#).

The next program will be on September 19 and will focus Biodiversity Collections and Education. Click [here](#) for more information regarding the webinar series and to register.

Enter the 2018 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 researcher, technician, collections curator, or student, engaging in research. The research may occur outside, in a lab, with 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 along with 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 2017 contest is featured on the cover of the April 2018 issue of *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 1 October 2018.

For more information or to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

Expand Your Broader Impact Skills: AIBS Communications Boot Camp for Scientists

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) is offering a professional development program designed to enhance the communication skills of scientists, particularly those interested in communicating with decision-makers and the news media. The program is an excellent way to develop new communication skills and identify effective methods for broadening the impact of research and education programs.

Individuals affiliated with NSC Alliance member institutions receive a significant discount on registration, but most provide documentation of their affiliation with an NSC Alliance member institution to receive the reduced rate.

The AIBS Communications Training Boot Camp for Scientists expands on AIBS' highly successful media and science policy training workshops. The Boot Camp meets the needs of everyone from graduate students to senior researchers and program administrators to newly elected professional society leaders.

The Boot Camp is an intensive, two-day, hands-on training program that will be held in Washington, DC on October 15-16, 2018.

Participants will learn:

- How to translate scientific findings for non-technical audiences
- How to tell a resonant story that informs decision-makers
- How to prepare for and participate in a news interview
- How to prepare for and engage in a meeting with a decision-maker
- How to protect your scientific reputation
- How to identify and define the audience you need to reach
- What decision-makers want to hear from a scientist
- What reporters are looking for in an interview
- How to leverage social media

- How the nation's science policy is developed and implemented

Participants will also have the opportunity for formal and informal discussions with science policy and communications experts working in Washington, DC.

AIBS Individual Members and individuals nominated to participate by an AIBS Member Society/Organization (including NSC Alliance members) receive a \$55 discount on registration.

Learn more about the program and register now at https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/communications_boot_camp.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 dbosnjak@aibs.org.