

In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance to Convene Collections Policy, Advocacy Meeting
  - USDA Plans to Relocate ERS and NIFA, Realign ERS
  - Senate Approves Third Spending Package
  - Job Opening: NSF Division Director
  - NIH Requests Comments on Proposal to Amend Guidelines on Genetic Research
  - Collections in the News: Legal Issues and Digitized Specimens
  - BCoN 2018 Webinar Series: Archived Webinars on Biodiversity Collections Now Available
  - Prepare Your Resumé, Hone Your Interview Skills
  - Expand Your Broader Impact Skills: AIBS Communications Boot Camp for Scientists
- 

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).

---

### **NSC Alliance to Convene Collections Policy, Advocacy Meeting**

The NSC Alliance Board of Directors recognizes that there are a growing number of policy issues confronting the natural science collections community. To more effectively engage in these issues and to support more coordinated community action related to matters of funding, regulation, research and training, among other issues, the NSC Alliance is convening a meeting of its membership in Washington, DC, on April 2-3, 2019. This meeting, tentatively called: Collections Policy and Advocacy, provides the forum for representatives of NSC Alliance members to gather and discuss with policymakers and each other the significant issues shaping the community, and collections-based research and stewardship. In addition to formal presentations from national policymakers, the program will include sessions designed to support information exchange and networking among NSC Alliance members. Discussion sessions will also drive the development of policy recommendations and new, coordinated strategies for engaging key audiences.

Importantly, the meeting will include more than discussions of vexing issues. NSC Alliance will facilitate meetings between its members and congressional and executive branch officials,

providing a valuable opportunity to educate the individuals who must ultimately support new investments or other policy remedies.

Additional information, including registration information, about this meeting will be shared with NSC Alliance members in the next few weeks.

### **USDA Plans to Relocate ERS and NIFA, Realign ERS**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced its intent to relocate the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to a location(s) outside of Washington, DC, by the end of 2019. The new location(s) has not been determined.

The proposed move is part of a broader reorganization effort at the USDA and will impact as many as 700 employees, primarily scientists and economic researchers, about 400 at NIFA and 300 at ERS. Plans indicate that employees who decide to move from their current locations in the Washington, DC area will receive relocation assistance and the same base pay. Additionally, USDA is also seeking approval from the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget to offer voluntary early retirements and voluntary separation incentives.

Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue argues that the plan is a way to save taxpayer dollars and bring ERS and NIFA employees closer to the rural stakeholders that they serve. He said, “We've seen significant turnover in these positions; it has been difficult to recruit employees to the Washington, DC, area, particularly given the high cost of living and long commutes.”

Secretary Perdue also announced that ERS, currently under the Research, Education, and Economics mission area, will be moved to the Office of the Chief Economist, under the supervision of an undersecretary, who reports directly to the Agriculture Secretary. “These two agencies were aligned once before, and bringing them back together will enhance the effectiveness of economic analysis at USDA,” according to USDA.

The realignment of ERS has been criticized by the Union of Concerned Scientists as an effort to limit the autonomy of a research agency by placing it under the supervision of a political appointee. Science, higher education, and some agricultural groups have also expressed deep concerns with the proposal. In a letter to Secretary Perdue, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Board on Agriculture Assembly stressed that NIFA, being USDA’s “premier extramural agricultural science agency,” collaborates with universities, individual researchers, as well as other Federal agencies and raised concerns that the relocation might diminish NIFA’s ability to effectively collaborate with their broad base of stakeholders.

According to the Washington Post, Scott Swinton, Professor of Agricultural and Environmental Economics at Michigan State University and former President of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, argued that the reorganization may be an excuse for gutting federal agricultural research. Swinton predicts that several top economists and scientists will resign,

rather than move out of the DC area. Sonny Ramaswamy, former NIFA Administrator, echoed that many longtime staffers will not make the move.

Earlier this year, the Trump Administration proposed to cut the budget of the ERS by 50 percent. However, the House and Senate agriculture appropriations bills would provide the agency with flat funding in fiscal year 2019.

### **Senate Approves Third Spending Package**

The Senate passed its third spending package for fiscal year (FY) 2019 on August 23, 2018 that would provide \$856.9 billion for defense and domestic spending. The package contains the Defense and Labor-Health and Human Services-Education funding bills and accounts for 75 percent of all discretionary spending.

If enacted into law, the Senate legislation would provide the National Institutes of Health with \$39.1 billion, a \$2 billion increase from the FY 2018 funding level. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would receive \$7.87 billion in FY 2019, with \$508.3 million (-\$106.2 million) directed to the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and \$157 million (-\$48.8 million) provided to the National Center for Environmental Health. The bill includes \$2.3 billion (+\$425 million) for Alzheimer's research, \$550 million (+\$37 million) to combat antibiotic resistant bacteria, \$429.4 million (+\$29 million) for the BRAIN Initiative to map the human brain, and \$500 million for research on opioid addiction and treatment.

The Senate legislation would provide \$242 million (+\$2 million) to the Institute of Museum and Library Services to support programs that “encourage innovation, provide life-long learning opportunities, promote cultural and civic engagement, and improve access to a variety of services and information.”

Education funding in the Senate package includes \$65 million for STEM education, an increase of \$15 million above FY 2018. In addition, the bill includes a \$125 million increase for Student Support and Academic Enrichment formula grants, flexible dollars that can be used by school districts for a wide-range of activities including STEM education.

The Senate has now approved nine out of the twelve appropriations bills that fund the Federal government. The House has yet to pass their version of the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education bill, but approved a \$675 billion Defense appropriations bill in June.

### **Job Opening: NSF Division Director**

The Biological Sciences Directorate at the National Science Foundation (NSF) is inviting applications for the position of Division Director in the Division of Biological Infrastructure (DBI). The division works to advance biological research by supporting the development and enhancement of biological resources, human capital, and centers.

The closing date for the application is September 4, 2018. For more information go to: <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/507310500>

### **NIH Requests Comments on Proposal to Amend Guidelines on Genetic Research**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking public comment on a proposal to amend the NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules. The proposal is intended to “streamline the oversight of human gene transfer clinical research protocols or gene therapy research and reduce duplicative reporting requirements already captured within the existing regulatory framework.” The agency proposes removing the NIH protocol submission, review, and reporting requirements under the current guidelines and modifying the responsibilities of the Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee (RAC).

Comments on the proposal will be accepted until October 16, 2018. Comments may be submitted electronically here: <https://osp.od.nih.gov/comment-form-nih-guidelines/>

Questions about the proposal may be directed to the NIH Office of Science Policy at [SciencePolicy@od.nih.gov](mailto:SciencePolicy@od.nih.gov).

Click here for more information on the proposal: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-08-17/html/2018-17760.htm>

### **Collections in the News: Legal Issues and Digitized Specimens**

A new article entitled, “Digitizing Specimens-Legal Issues Abound,” will appear in the September issue of the journal *BioScience*. The article is currently available as an Advance Access publication. The article examines legal issues arising from the digitization of museum specimens and making them publicly available, including ownership of images and data and the ability to copyright them.

The article raises several concerns. “Do the people in possession of the specimen own it, and do they have permission to distribute the specimen for scanning? Who claims the rights to the digital data? Does a contract between the owning institution and the source of the specimen affect its digital reproduction and distribution?”

To read the article, visit <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/biosci/biy086/5063482?redirectedFrom=fulltext#.W2w1314Q9xs.email>

### **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](#).

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

Registration is now open for the Employment Acquisition Skills Boot Camp for Scientists, a new professional development program from the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS). Through NSC Alliance's membership in AIBS, individuals affiliated with NSC Alliance member institutions receive discounted registration rates for AIBS programs.

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 developed a program to help scientists hone and practice the skills needed to secure employment. AIBS's 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>.

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

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) will offer its Communications Training Boot Camp for Scientists this October 15-16, 2018. Students and staff affiliated with NSC Alliance member institutions are eligible to receive a significant discount off of the regular program registration rate.

The AIBS Communications Training Boot Camp for Scientists was 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.

The Boot Camp is an intensive, two-day, hands-on training program.

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.

Learn more about the program and register now at [https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/communications\\_boot\\_camp.html](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](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).