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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.

Nominations Sought for National Academies Panel on Biological Collections

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's (NASEM) Board on Life Sciences (BLS) is seeking experts to serve on a committee that will review the contributions of biological collections in research and education.

The expert panel will examine both living organisms and preserved biodiversity specimens that are supported by the National Science Foundation. The committee will study the major advances in the use of collections in the last ten years, determine the biggest challenges in maintaining collections, recommend innovative ways in which biological collections can be utilized in the future, and suggest strategies for their sustained support of research and education.

The study entitled, "Biological Collections: Their Past, Present, and Future Contributions and Options for Sustaining Them," requires experts with backgrounds in biodiversity, marine science, ecology, environmental science, and evolutionary biology, and experience with collection curation and management.

The deadline for submitting nominations is September 21, 2018. Self-nominations are accepted.

Nominations can be submitted at https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/4558967/Nominate-an-Expert-NASEM-Study-on-Biological-Collections?utm_source=Division+on+Earth+and+Life+Studies&utm_campaign=ae8a59f74e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_09_06_07_55&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3c0b1ad5c8-ae8a59f74e-233941497&mc_cid=ae8a59f74e&mc_eid=a271cda812.

To receive updates about the study, subscribe at <https://nationalacademies.us19.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=126022b3c9b5339309157088a&id=f2f3c4827d>

Fire at Brazil's National Museum Destroys Millions of Science Collections

A massive fire at Brazil's National Museum in Rio de Janeiro has resulted in the loss of about 20 million artefacts, including science and natural history collections. Details of the extent of the damage are still emerging, but a large insect collection of nearly 5 million specimens has reportedly been lost. The herbarium, which houses about 650,000 plant specimens, had moved to a separate building in 2007 and was spared from the fire.

“It's an irreparable loss, not only for Brazilian science but for the world. The building can be reconstructed, restored, and everything else, but the collections can never be replaced. Two centuries of science and culture are lost forever,” said Sergio Alex Kugland de Azevedo, a paleozoologist and former Director of the museum.

The museum served as a major research institution and housed items such as the first fossil discovered in Brazil, the oldest female skull found in the Americas, and the Brazil's largest meteorite.

Infrastructural limitations made it challenging to suppress the flames in the museum full of flammable materials such as wood and paper. There were no sprinkler systems in the museum and very limited water was available in the fire hydrants, forcing fire fighters to carry in water from a nearby lake.

The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) managed the museum with financial support from the federal government. *Science* reported that the scientific community in Brazil blames “chronic underfunding” for the disaster. “We all knew something like this was going to happen sooner or later; it was just a matter of time,” said anthropologist Walter Neves, a retired Professor at the University of São Paulo (USP). “The museum was completely abandoned, left to rot by the disdain and carelessness of public authorities. I am in complete grief,” he said. A recent [Viewpoint article](#) in *BioScience*, discussed the growing pressures on global biodiversity research as a result of science budget cuts in Brazil.

In an [Op-Ed](#) written for the LA Times, Dr. John McCormack, Associate Professor of Biology at NSC Alliance member Occidental College and the Director and Curator of the Moore Laboratory

of Zoology, warned that such an incident can also happen in the U.S. He argued that, “The infrastructure of [American] public museums is crumbling too.” He added, “If this tragic event can teach us anything, it’s that we must reinvest in our public museums.”

In the Op-Ed, McCormack points to the Trump Administration’s proposal to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which is a significant financier for museums, and the Biological Survey Unit, a group of scientists who curate and maintain a million biological specimens in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. “This is a recipe for the kind of catastrophe that took place in Brazil. After years of paltry funding, one rare accident can easily become a disaster,” he warned.

Hold the Date: 2019 NSC Alliance Policy Meeting

The NSC Alliance has announced that it will convene a meeting of its membership on April 2-3, 2019, in Washington, DC. Additional information about this meeting will be available in the coming weeks, but the meeting will provide NSC Alliance members with an opportunity to discuss with national policymakers and each other issues influencing the natural history collections community. Participants will also have an opportunity to meet with lawmakers and agency personnel.

Interior Rolls Out Reorganization Plan

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has announced the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) plan to reorganize its bureaus into 12 “unified regions.” The proposed management re-design establishes new regional divisions based on the boundaries of states and watersheds, including a California-Great Basin Region, a Lower Colorado Basin Region, an Upper Colorado Basin Region, and Mississippi Basin Region, among others.

The proposal has been under development for several months and was shared in a memo with DOI employees and Senior Executive Service (SES) personnel on August 29, 2018, according to departmental sources. “Our new Unified Regions will allow important decisions to be made nearer to where our stakeholders and intergovernmental partners live and work, and will make joint problem-solving and improved coordination between our Bureaus and other Federal, State, and local agencies easier,” stated Secretary Zinke.

The 12 unified regions will replace the 49 individual Interior Bureau regional boundaries. Secretary Zinke said that the reorganization will “reduce bureaucratic redundancy, will improve communication between our experts in the field and leaders in Washington, D.C., and will allow us to share our knowledge and resources more effectively.”

Under the plan, the national headquarters for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will be moved to a city in the western United States, where the vast majority of public lands managed by the agency are located. The location for the new headquarters has not yet been determined. Individual BLM state offices will continue to function under the new unified regions. Secretary

Zinke has indicated that there will be no office or personnel relocations or changes to reporting structure during the initial stages of the implementation of the new plan.

Each new region will be managed under a “Regional Leadership Team”, an idea outlined by Susan Combs, acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for DOI, at a roundtable discussion organized by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT). Combs described Alaska as a model for operations under the reorganization plan. “We started with a pilot in Alaska, because it's one state that has all the bureaus, it already has a legislative framework that requires federal and state agencies to work together,” said Combs. “So, they are working away on inter-bureau collaboration.”

The regional leadership teams will be comprised of SES members from each bureau in each unified region, with an SES member from outside being appointed in cases where there are no SES members for every bureau. In the first month, a regional facilitator will be selected from each team to guide the team across six areas, including collaborative conservation, recreation, permitting, acquisition, human resource management, and information technology management. The regional facilitators along with their leadership teams will identify key personnel for the six areas of focus, determine the “as is” and “future state” operations for their respective unified regions, and also develop an options paper to be used in the selection and rotation process for the Interior Regional Director.

The plan applies to all Interior agencies, except the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, and the Bureau of Indian Education. Whether these agencies are eventually aligned with the new regional boundaries will be determined after tribal consultation.

President Nominates NIFA, NPS Directors

The White House has nominated Dr. J. Scott Angle to be Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Mr. David Vela to be the Director of the National Park Service (NPS) at the Department of Interior (DOI).

Dr. Angle, President and CEO of the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), has a background in heavy metals and their interaction with the environment. He worked for 24 years as a professor of soil science and administrator for the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station and Maryland Cooperative Extension at the University of Maryland. He also served as Dean and Director of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at the University of Georgia for 10 years. He is a Fellow at the American Society of Agronomy and the Soil Science Society of America. Dr. Angle earned his Ph.D. in soil microbiology from the University of Missouri.

Mr. Vela has worked at NPS for 28 years and currently serves as the Superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway. He has held various park postings within NPS, including at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. He has also served as Director of the NPS’ Southeast Region and Associate Director for Workforce,

Relevancy, and Inclusion in the NPS headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Vela has a B.S. in recreation and parks from the Texas A&M University.

New IMLS Grant for Small Museums

The Institute of Museums and Library Services has announced a new funding opportunity for small museums. *Inspire! Grants for Small Museums* is a special initiative of the Museums for America (MFA) program designed to motivate small museums to apply for grants to implement projects that address priorities identified in their strategic plans.

The program includes three project categories: Lifelong Learning, Community Anchors and Catalysts, and Collections Stewardship and Public Access. Under the program, grant funding of \$5,000-\$50,000 can be secured for a period of up to two years.

The deadline to apply for the grant is November 1, 2018. Learn more at <https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/inspire-grants-small-museums>.

National Fossil Day is October 17

National Fossil Day, an annual celebration organized by the National Park Service, will take place on October 17, 2018. National Fossil Day is a nationwide celebration that will include paleontology activities planned by partner organizations across the United States.

NSC Alliance has a [short document](#) about the scientific value of fossil collections.

The participation of local museums, universities, and other scientific organizations is central to National Fossil Day. Help your local community learn about local paleontological and natural resources by participating in the event.

To join as a partner for National Fossil Day, visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fossilday/events.htm>.

Job Openings: Two NEON Biorepository Positions at ASU

The Arizona State University (ASU) School of Life Sciences and Biodiversity Knowledge Integration Center (BioKIC) is accepting applications for two long-term collections/research/biodiversity informatics positions at the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) biorepository at ASU:

1. NEON Biorepository Cryo-Collections Manager:
<http://life.mcmaster.ca/~brian/evoldir/Jobs/ArizonaStateU.CryoCollectionsManager>
2. NEON Biorepository Biodiversity Informatician:

<http://life.mcmaster.ca/~brian/evoldir/Jobs/ArizonaStateU.BiodiversityInformatician>

[NEON](#) a continental-scale ecological observation facility, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and operated by Battelle. Arizona State University will be the primary location for NEON's national biorepository for the next 30 years and will house biological specimens collected from 81 sites across the country and natural history collections.

Email enquiries about the open positions can be directed to Nico Franz (nico.franz@asu.edu).

Collections and Education – Upcoming BCoN Webinar

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 September 19 and will focus on new opportunities for education and outreach as a result of natural history collections and the mobilization of specimen and occurrence-based data.

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

Learn to Communicate and Influence like a Pro: 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.

Deadline Approaching: 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>.

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.