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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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### **Action Alert: Ask Your Members of Congress to Support NSF**

Congress has begun work to set funding levels for federal programs for fiscal year (FY) 2020. Scientists interested in the National Science Foundation (NSF) should consider contacting their U.S. Representative and Senators to ask that they provide NSF with \$9 billion in FY 2020.

NSF is the primary federal funding source for discovery-driven research at our nation's universities and colleges. The President's budget request for FY 2020 proposes a 12.5 percent cut to NSF, including a 13 percent reduction to its research activities. This budget hurts research and undermines the nation's ability to address national challenges.

If funded at \$9 billion, NSF can accelerate progress on its 10 Big Ideas, expand support for early career researchers, and create new interdisciplinary research programs. This funding level will also ensure that NSF can sustain investments in the programs that are of interest to NSC Alliance members. At the \$9 billion funding level, NSF will be able to sustain investments in core research programs.

Individuals can send a letter to their members of Congress from the AIBS [Legislative Action Center](#).

## **NSC Alliance Urges Senate Appropriators to Support Federal Funding for Collections**

The NSC Alliance provided testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committees regarding fiscal year (FY) 2020 funding for certain programs that curate natural history collections within the Department of the Interior and Smithsonian Institution.

“Scientific collections are critical infrastructure for our nation’s research enterprise and a national treasure. Research specimens connect us to the past, are used to solve current problems, and are helping to predict threats to human health, methods for ensuring food security, and the impact of future environmental changes. Sustained investments in scientific collections are in our national interest.”

The testimony called for new investments within the Department of the Interior and for the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History.

[Read NSCA’s FY 2020 Interior testimony to the Senate.](#)

## **Scientists Call for National Agenda for Biodiversity Research, Education**

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN), an NSF-funded project led by AIBS in partnership with the NSC Alliance and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, released a new report, *Extending US Biodiversity Collections to Promote Research and Education*, at the National Press Club on April 4, 2019. Members of the NSC Alliance were on hand and participated in the report rollout.

The report outlines a national agenda that leverages digital data in biodiversity collections for new uses. Informed by a series of workshops and stakeholder discussions, the report aims to stimulate new research endeavors, particularly in areas where biology intersects with other fields and engages students and the public.

To download a copy of the plan, please visit: <https://bcon.aibs.org/2019/04/04/bcon-report-extending-u-s-biodiversity-collections-to-promote-research-and-education/>. A version of the report is currently being prepared for publication in a scientific journal.

A podcast with the BCoN Advisory Council members is also available at <http://bioscienceaibs.libsyn.com/biodiversity-and-the-extended-specimen-network>

## **NSC Alliance Collections Policy and Advocacy Meeting A Success**

On 2-3 April 2019, the NSC Alliance convened its inaugural Collections Policy and Advocacy Meeting in Washington, DC. The two-day meeting was an opportunity for NSC Alliance members to engage with federal program officers, National Academies staff members, and other collections professionals for discussions about common challenges. Among the topics discussed were funding and research priorities for the National Science Foundation and US Geological

Survey. Participants also had the opportunity to learn about the National Academies on-going work to author a report on living and non-living collections.

In conjunction with the meeting, members of the NSC Alliance Board of Directors met to discuss ways that NSC Alliance can lead efforts to tackle some of the issues surfaced during the meeting. Conversations are on-going and a plan for tackling some issues related to collecting policy and priorities for research and education is emerging. More details will be shared with the NSC Alliance community as they emerge.

### **Plan to Attend: 2019 Digital Data Conference**

The Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History in collaboration with iDigBio of the Florida Museum of Natural History, the Natural Science Collections Alliance, and Ecological Society of America is pleased to announce the third annual Digital Data in Biodiversity Research conference, to be held 10-12 June 2019 at Yale University, New Haven, CT.

The 2019 conference will focus on methods, protocols, and analytical tools for the use of digital data in biodiversity research and encompass the uses of such data across all disciplines within the biological and ecological sciences. Special emphasis is placed on the use of digitized specimen data and big data analytics.

For more information and to register, please visit

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/3rd-annual-digital-data-conference-methods-protocols-and-analytical-tools-for-specimen-based-tickets-54760252389>

### **Help Wanted: Social Media**

Would you like to help share the collections story with the world beyond collections? NSC Alliance does. We would like your help with efforts to use social media to better share the excitement and importance of collections with new audiences. If you are interested volunteering a little time and some intellectual energy to raise the profile of collections-related research and education, please contact Robert Gropp at [rgropp@aibs.org](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

### **Red Wolves Are a Distinct Species, NASEM Study**

A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) panel has found that the red wolf is a taxonomically distinct species from the Mexican gray wolf. The committee released its congressionally mandated report, *Evaluating the Taxonomic Status of the Mexican Gray Wolf and the Red Wolf*, on March 28, 2019.

Several individuals affiliated with NSC Alliance member institutions shared reports and comments with the panel.

In 2018, at the direction of Congress, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) asked NASEM to conduct an independent assessment of the taxonomic status of the red wolf and Mexican gray wolf. The study was mandated as a part of an appropriations bill passed in March 2018, in order to inform conservation actions under the Endangered Species Act.

“Over time ... [lawmakers] heard lots of different stories about the red wolf and the Mexican gray wolf, and I think they wanted to put an end to all of the back-and-forth,” Elsa Haubold with the USFWS said during the committee's first meeting. In 2017, USFWS had acknowledged “a lack of consensus” among scientists on whether the red wolf was a subspecies of the gray wolf or a separate species.

The [report](#) concludes that, “the historic red wolves constituted a taxonomically valid species” and that, “extant red wolves are distinct from the extant gray wolves and coyotes,” but also cautions that, “additional genomic evidence from historic specimens could change this assessment.” The study findings support USFWS’s current view that the red wolf is “a valid taxonomic species” and the Mexican gray wolf is “a valid taxonomic subspecies” of the gray wolf. Both wolves are listed as endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

“The findings ... validate everything we've been doing to try to goad USFWS into taking better care of the remaining wild red wolves in North Carolina,” said Ron Sutherland, Chief Scientist at Wildlands Network, according to *E&E News*.

The nine-member NASEM research committee that conducted the assessment was chaired by Dr. Joseph Travis, Distinguished Professor of Biology at Florida State University.

## **NSF Announces IOS Virtual Office Hours**

The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) the Division of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) has announced a new information opportunity; monthly virtual Office Hours.

These monthly information sessions are an opportunity to learn about ongoing and new opportunities at NSF. Program Directors will be available on the third Thursday of each month at 1:00 pm Eastern Time to answer questions, discuss current opportunities at NSF, and make NSF accessible to all.

The first IOS virtual Office Hour session will be held April 18th, 2019 and will include discussion of the new IOS solicitation, the different tracks within it, and operating details about the new no-submission deadline mechanism.

Participants are invited to join in remotely with questions, comments and concerns. A registration link is available below. Sign up to the IOS blog to receive future notifications for IOS Office Hours.

Virtual Office Hours  
Thursday, April 18, 2019

1:00 pm | Eastern Daylight Time (New York, GMT-04:00) | 1 hr 30 mins

Register: <https://nsf2.webex.com/nsf2/j.php?RGID=r20f1dd5d0454751569b16d2dd963e883>

After your request has been approved, you'll receive instructions for joining the meeting.

Need help? Go to <http://collaborationhelp.cisco.com>.

## **New Interior Secretary Confirmed**

Senate lawmakers confirmed David Bernhardt as the next Secretary of the Interior on April 11, 2019. Bernhardt is currently serving as the Acting Interior Secretary after former Secretary Ryan Zinke resigned from the position in December 2018.

Bernhardt previously served as the Deputy Interior Secretary after being confirmed by the Senate in August 2017. He has served in various leadership roles at the Department of the Interior for nearly a decade. Bernhardt also served as United States Commissioner for the International Boundary Commission between the United States and Canada. He has worked in the office of former Representative Scott McInnis (R-CO) and has also served on the Virginia Board of Game and Inland Fisheries.

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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).