

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Natural Science Collections Group Working to Identify Impacts of Negative Economy on Scientific Research, Education Institutions**

Washington, DC – The Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance), the United States' leading nonprofit association serving natural science collections, their human resources, and the institutions that house them for the benefit of science and society has launched a survey to identify how the current global financial meltdown may affect natural science collections.

Natural science collections include natural history museums, herbariums, botanic gardens, genetic resource centers, mineral collections, and much more. They are, in essence, resources from and about the natural world.

The NSC Alliance is conducting this survey which was developed in collaboration with the Public Policy Office of the American Institute of Biological Sciences. Members of the NSC Alliance 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.

NSC Alliance President Dr. Michael A. Mares describes the survey as an important step in determining the scale and scope of the economic challenges facing natural science collections and museums in fulfilling their scientific research and education missions. Mares notes that some smaller science collections were suffering from poor budgets and inadequate staffing before the current economic crisis. Moreover, many of the important federal agency programs (such as those of the National Science Foundation) that award competitive, peer-reviewed grants to natural science collections have not enjoyed significant budget increases recently. Government agencies, such as the United States Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior, and others, also house natural science collections; these agency budgets have been tight for years.

Mares, Director of the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, urges all natural science collections to complete the survey. "These data will help inform strategies that may help us survive this challenging time," he said.

The NSC Alliance online survey remains open until 12:00 PM eastern time on Thursday, 30 October 2008. The NSC Alliance plans to repeat the survey in 2009. "This economic spiral is happening quickly and we need to try and understand how it will impact our institutions," said Mares.

For information about the survey, visit <http://nscalliance.org/?p=87>.

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