

20 August 2009

Dr. John Holdren, Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street Room 5228
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Dr. Holdren:

On behalf of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, I write to express strong support for the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) proposed Executive Order for issuance by President Obama to promote the preservation and use of scientific collections.

Our nation's natural science collections, whether at the Smithsonian Institution, an independent or university-affiliated natural history museum, or a science department at a small liberal arts college, are irreplaceable resources that enable us to understand the world in which we live. These specimen and data collections not only help us understand the biological and physical history of earth, they also are essential to our ability to understand how earth systems function today and how they may function in an ever changing world.

The American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists is dedicated to the scientific study of fishes, amphibians and reptiles. Today, ASIH has a membership of 2,400 and the society edits and publishes the scholarly journal COPEIA. COPEIA is an internationally respected, widely-cited quarterly that publishes original research on fishes, amphibians and reptiles, emphasizing systematics, ecology, behavior, genetics, morphology and physiology. The primary emphases of the Society are to increase knowledge about these organisms, to disseminate that knowledge through publications, conferences, symposia, and other means, and to encourage and support young scientists who will make future advances in these fields. The programs of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists are part of a global effort to interpret, understand, and conserve the Earth's natural diversity and to contribute to the wise use of natural resources for the long-term benefit of humankind. **The fields of ichthyology and herpetology build, heavily use and depend on our nation's scientific collections of fishes, amphibians and reptiles.**

The proposed Executive Order sends a strong message to the natural science collections research and education community. In short, it would demonstrate that the Obama Administration is aware of the important role our institutions play in the nation's scientific research and education enterprise. Moreover, it would demonstrate that federal support and use of data from scientific collections has been hindered by inadequate coordination of planning and budgets. The Executive Order would establish a formal mechanism by which federal agencies could ensure wise and strategic investments in this important and irreplaceable part of our research infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

John G. Lundberg
President, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists
Chaplin Chair of Ichthyology
Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia