



SPNHC

ADVANCING COLLECTIONS CARE

11 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 Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC), 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.

The objects in our Nation's natural science collections form a physical inventory of our cultural, biological, and geological heritage and enhance our understanding of our world and our place in it. The information they hold is inestimable and their physical value increases with every new technology to emerge. They are the foundation for our understanding of the Earth's life forms and processes and are essential to our ability to understand how these systems may function in an ever changing world.

SPNHC is an international organization devoted to the preservation, conservation, and management of natural history collections. We have more than 500 members worldwide, including curators, collections managers, conservators, preparators, and database administrators. Members of the Society have always had a strong interest in the value of natural history collections and the role they play in society for understanding the history of life and global change. The Society takes an active role in developing and promoting best practices for the care and use of these collections, through publications, workshop meetings, training courses, and on-line resources.

We believe that 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. On a practical note, SPNHC recently established a sessional committee to consider the results of the recent surveys of Federal and Federally-Supported Science Collections and make recommendations to the Society on what help we might be able to provide response. I would be happy to discuss this effort with you at greater length if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Richard K. Rabeler, Ph.D.
President, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections

Senior Collections Manager and Assistant Research Scientist
University of Michigan Herbarium, Ann Arbor MI