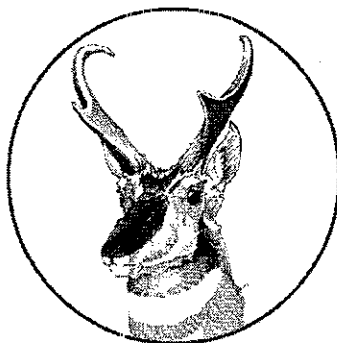


American Society of Mammalogists

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2 September 2009

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

Dear Dr. Holdren:

The American Society of Mammalogists strongly encourages President Obama to issue an Executive Order for the preservation and use of science collections. We fully endorse the model Executive Order recently sent to you by the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

The American Society of Mammalogists is a non-profit, professional, scientific and educational society consisting of nearly 3,000 members from all 50 states and more than 60 other countries worldwide. Founded in 1919, the Society is the world's oldest and largest organization devoted to the study and conservation of mammals. A significant cross-section of our members utilize scientific collections to conduct their research using both classic methods and as well as new technology. Many members also deposit specimens acquired during their research into scientific collections as a means of assuring that the results of their studies can be verified.

While members of the public are most familiar with taxidermy specimens used in museum exhibits, scientific collections contain specimens that are specifically prepared for research usage. Whether studying a single species or answering pressing questions of the day, the scope of information that can be learned by studying specimens in scientific collections cannot be over-emphasized. Study of emerging diseases and global climate change are only the most recent examples of data that may be elicited from studying scientific collections. In the 1960's, bird

eggs in museum collections helped us to understand the impact of DDT. In the 1990's, tissues in scientific collections provided early insight into the species and distribution of rodents that carry hantavirus, the cause of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome in humans. The bird collection and experts at the National Museum of Natural History proved invaluable in guiding investigators to the species of bird that caused the January 2009 plane crash in New York.

Unfortunately, in recent years scientific collections have faced reduced funding at a time when technological developments have given us the potential to significantly expand the use of natural science specimens and their associated data. The proposed Executive Order would build on the work initiated by the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections and would better enable federal agencies to improve access to government collections. The proposed Executive Order would also support appropriate actions to improve access to science collections held by universities, state and local governments, and free-standing museums and research centers.

Natural science collections are valuable national assets and are worthy of a national commitment. In addition to enhancing our understanding of the history of life on earth, greater support of science collections can increase our understanding of and response to emerging diseases, conservation of biological diversity and climate change. The American Society of Mammalogists encourages the President to take this opportunity to build on the good work and momentum of the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections by issuing an Executive Order on science collections such as the one proposed by the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Suzanne B. McLaren, President
American Society of Mammalogists