



NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS ALLIANCE

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August 3, 2010

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office of Program Planning and Integration
1315 East West Highway, Room 15749
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan.

The NSC Alliance is a nonprofit association that supports natural science collections, their human resources, the institutions that house them, and their research activities for the benefit of science and society. Our 100 institutional 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.

Scientific collections are an important part of NOAA's records of environmental information. The strategic plan should address the curation of, and access to, the 40 scientific collections held by the agency. The directors of the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Science and Technology Policy instructed agencies to do so in the annual Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies (M-10-30) released on July 21, 2010: "Agencies should implement strategies for increasing the benefits for science and society derived from scientific collections by following the recommendations in the report by the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections and efforts outlined in the National R&D Strategy for Microbial Forensics."

Scientific collections, including biological specimens, tissue and cell cultures, and soil and water samples, offer a treasure trove of information about Earth systems and aid in regulation and management of the nation's natural resources. Natural science collections, whether housed at a government agency, university, museum, or marine laboratory, are essential to any research effort that seeks to understand living and non-living marine resources. These collections, which are irreplaceable data, contribute to cutting edge research on environmental contamination, biodiversity, and climate change. Without this knowledge, scientists are unable to develop models that forecast future ecosystem responses to environmental change. In short, research utilizing natural science collection specimens informs sound environmental stewardship. For instance, specimens collected from the outer continental shelf during past decades serve as

baselines of the biological, sedimentary, physio-chemical, and oceanographic conditions of U.S. waters. In the Gulf of Mexico, this information will be vital in responding to the BP oil spill.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these comments. If we may be of further assistance on this or any other matter, please contact Dr. Robert Groppe, NSC Alliance Director of Public Policy at 202-628-1500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W-Y-B".

William Y. Brown, Ph.D.
President, NSC Alliance, and
President and CEO, Woods Hole Research Center