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Policy News from NSC Alliance

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at rgropp@aibs.org.

Join Us for the 2011 NSC Alliance/SPNCH Meeting

Join the NSC Alliance and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections for their fourth annual joint meeting. The conference will be held 23-28 May 2011 in San Francisco, California. This year, the meeting will focus on “Sustainable Museums–Sustaining Collections,” and will be hosted by the California Academy of Sciences in their Platinum LEED certified museum. The meeting website (<http://research.calacademy.org/spnhc>) provides information on the meeting program, lodging and transportation, and travel assistance grants.

In addition to the NSC Alliance Board of Directors and business meetings, scheduled for Tuesday, 24 May, the NSC Alliance has planned a plenary panel discussion on science policy. This panel will take place during the morning session of 25 May. A program on international issues, organized by SPNHC will take place during the afternoon of 25 May.

Visit <http://research.calacademy.org/spnhc> for more information and to register.

Effects of FY 2011 Appropriations Starting to Emerge

Congress may have finished its work on the fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget last month, but federal agencies are still scrambling to figure out what the Continuing Resolution that funds the government through September 2011 means for programs.

So far, federal science agencies generally have not released information to the public about the impacts of the nearly \$40 billion cut by Congress in mid-April. While that legislation targets a number of programs for reductions, all agencies were subject to a 0.2 percent cut below FY 2010.

An analysis by the AIBS Public Policy Office found that the National Science Foundation (NSF) was cut by \$67 million to \$6.9 billion. This is more than half a billion dollars less than President Obama requested for the agency in FY 2011. Much of the reduction (\$54 million) comes from the Research and Related Activities budget line. The Education and Human Resources budget account loses about \$12 million. The Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction account is funded at nearly the same level as in FY 2010, which is about \$48 million dollars less than the agency requested. Since the program is not fully funded for FY 2011, some projects may be delayed; this could impact the start of construction of the National Ecological Observatory Network. No information is available yet regarding the budget for the Biological Sciences Directorate.

NSF's one percent budget reduction was comparable to cuts at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Department of Energy Office of Science. NIH announced on 25 April that its one percent budget reduction would result in a comparable reduction in the size of ongoing research grants. Moreover, the size of grants awarded by the National Cancer Institute will decline by three percent. The agency also expects to make slightly fewer new awards for competitive research grants. (See <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-11-068.html> for more information.)

Congress made even deeper cuts to the budgets of other science agencies. Funding for science and technology at the Environmental Protection Agency was reduced by 3.8 percent to \$813 million. The United States Geological Survey received \$1.08 billion, a \$28 million cut (-2.5 percent).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was cut by 3.2 percent to \$4.6 billion. The larger issue for NOAA, however, may be the nearly \$1 billion in new funding that the agency requested but did not receive. These funds are needed for the continued development of weather and climate satellites.

Funding for competitive research grants at the Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture also fell far short of the President's budget request. The extramural grant program will receive about 40 percent less funding than requested.

The budget for the Institute of Museum and Library Services was reduced by nearly \$45 million (-16 percent). Funding for museums is \$30.1 million, a \$3.5 million reduction from FY 2010.

NSC Alliance Sponsors Congressional Visits: Sign Up to Showcase Science to Policymakers This August

NSC Alliance is proud to announce that it is a Sponsor of the 3rd Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event.

This national initiative is an opportunity for scientists across the country to meet with their members of Congress to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

The 3rd Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event will be held throughout the month of August 2011, when Representatives and Senators spend time in their Congressional districts and home states. This event is an opportunity for scientists, graduate students, representatives of research facilities, and people affiliated with scientific collections to meet with their members of Congress without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite their elected officials to visit their facility or can meet with the policymaker at the local congressional office.

Participants will be prepared for their congressional meetings through an interactive training webinar. Individuals participating in this event will receive information about federal funding for biological research, tools for improving their communication skills, and tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official.

Participation is free, but registration will close on July 15, 2011. For more information and to register, visit http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

White House Orders Federal Agencies to Submit Draft Scientific Integrity Plans

Federal agencies have until early August to complete draft scientific integrity policies, according to a recent memo from White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) director Dr. John Holdren.

Federal agencies are required by Presidential directive to develop and implement formal policies to ensure scientific integrity within their organization. Specifically, agencies must hire scientists based primarily on their technical expertise and not their ideology, subject scientific information to independent peer review when feasible, and ensure protections for whistleblowers. OSTP directed agencies to address transparency in public communication of science, professional development of government scientists and engineers, and lobbyists serving on federal advisory committees.

Agencies were required to submit a progress report to OSTP in April, a deadline which was met by 30 departments, agencies, and offices. Six government entities, including the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, submitted draft or complete policies.

It has been more than two years since President Obama directed his Administration to restore scientific integrity to government decision-making. The process should have been completed long ago, but OSTP overshot its deadline for releasing guidance to agencies by 17 months. The slow process has drawn criticism from members of Congress and the scientific community.

NSC Alliance Senate Testimony Supports Increased FY 2012 Funding for NSF

On 15 April, NSC Alliance provided testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies. The testimony supported fiscal year (FY) 2012 funding of \$7.767 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF). This funding level would provide a 13 percent increase for the agency over the FY 2010 budget.

The NSC Alliance testimony highlighted the contributions of NSF's Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) to science, education, and research infrastructure. In addition to supporting the increase for research funding for BIO, NSC Alliance urged Congress to support the \$10 million requested for digitization of biological collections.

Read NSC Alliance's testimony at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=372>.

NSF Outlines New Vision and Goals in Five Year Strategic Plan

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has outlined a new vision and goals for the agency for fiscal years 2011 to 2016. The new vision is more outcome-oriented than the previous vision: "NSF envisions a nation that capitalizes on new concepts in science and engineering and provides global leadership in advancing research and education." The strategic goals were also revised: transform the frontiers, innovate for society, and perform as a model organization.

According to the plan, the new vision and goals were developed "to better integrate them with the concepts of research and learning, and more closely align with NSF's merit review criteria of intellectual merit and broader impacts."

The strategic plan also utilizes new methods for evaluating the performance of NSF's investments in research and education. New performance goals include:

- Transform the Frontiers:
 - Make investments that lead to emerging new fields of science and engineering and shifts in existing fields.
 - Prepare and engage a diverse STEM workforce motivated to participate at the frontiers.
 - Keep the United States globally competitive at the frontiers of knowledge by increasing international partnerships and collaborations.
 - Enhance research infrastructure and promote data access to support researchers' and educators' capabilities and enable transformation at the frontiers.
- Innovate for Society:

- Make investments that lead to results and resources that are useful to society.
- Build the capacity of the nation's citizenry for addressing societal challenges through science and engineering.
- Support the development of innovative learning systems.
- Perform as a Model Organization:
 - Achieve management excellence through leadership, accountability, and personal responsibility.
 - Infuse learning as an essential element of the NSF culture with emphasis on professional development and personal growth.
 - Encourage and sustain a culture of creativity and innovation across the agency to ensure continuous improvement and achieve high levels of customer service.

To read the strategic plan, visit

<http://www.nsf.gov/news/strategicplan/index.jsp?WT.mcid=USNSF124>.

NSF Solicitation for Proposals for Research Coordination Networks

NSF has recently released a new solicitation for proposals for Research Coordination Networks (RCN) that focuses on the new investment area of Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability (SEES).

RCN-SEES welcomes proposals from:

- Universities and Colleges - Universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Such organizations also are referred to as academic institutions.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

The full RCN solicitation can be accessed at

www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11531/nsf11531.htm?org=NSF.

Deadline for RCN SEES-track proposals is May 24, 2011.

For more information about the new SEES investment area please go to the NSF website

www.nsf.gov/sees/. See also the SEES FAQs:

www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11039/nsf11039.jsp?org=NSF and the January 2011 Dear Colleague Letter for SEES: www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11022/nsf11022.jsp?org=NSF.

Request for Proposals for Oil Spill Research

The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative Research Board has announced the availability of a minimum of \$37.5 million per year to establish four to eight Research Consortia to study the effects of the Deepwater Horizon incident on the Gulf of Mexico. The research that will be conducted through these consortia will inform the scientific understanding of oil spill and dispersant impacts on ocean and coastal systems in the Gulf region, as well as other ocean and coastal systems, and how these systems respond to oil and gas inputs, especially large accidental inputs. The grant application guidance and requirements, along with the research themes that will be funded, are described in the request for proposals at <http://griresearchboard.org/rfp/RFP-1.html>.

Head of National Institute of Food and Agriculture to Step Down

Dr. Roger Beachy, the director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), plans to leave his position on 20 May 2011. In his two years as director, Beachy led the reorganization of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service into NIFA. He was also responsible for major changes in the program's competitive research grants, including targeting half of the competitive research funding for grand challenges like climate change.

According to an email from Dr. Catherine Woteki, USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics, the agency is "initiating an aggressive search to identify and bring on board a distinguished scientist as NIFA's next director." In the interim, Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young will serve as acting director of NIFA. Jacobs-Young currently serves as Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist at USDA.

National Science Board Launches Website for STEM Education Data

The National Science Board has launched a new website that presents data and trends on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education. The new tool provides easy access to data on K-12 and undergraduate STEM education for parents, students, teachers, and other stakeholders. The site uses data from the latest volume of Science and Engineering Indicators and allows the user to explore trends in state spending on education, student proficiency in STEM subjects, the outlook for science and engineering jobs, and other topics. Access the STEM Education Data and Trends website at <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/sei/edTool/>.

Scientists Aim to DNA Barcode All Plants in Wales

Wales is set to become the first country to produce a DNA barcode for every species of native flowering plant, according to a BBC News report. The Barcode Wales project plans on cataloging all 1,143 species of flowering plants that occur in the country based on unique gene sequences. The DNA sequences will be identified from freshly picked samples, as well as specimens from the National Museum Wales botanical collections. The team hopes that the

genetic database will be used to better understand genetic diversity in native plants and for conservation of pollinators. Their work is set to be completed by this summer.

To read the BBC News article, visit

http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9449000/9449068.stm.

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance 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. Website: www.NSCAlliance.org.

Note: You are receiving a copy of this electronic report as part of your membership in the NSC Alliance. Contact the Alliance office with any email address or member representative name changes send an email to spotter@aibs.org.