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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.

Request for Comments: Draft Implementation Plan for a Network Integrated Biollections Alliance

The biollections community is currently engaged in an important process to develop an Implementation Plan that will guide the multi-year effort to create a Network Integrated Biollections Alliance.

The *Implementation Plan for the Network Integrated Biollections Alliance* builds upon the work of an earlier report: *A Strategic Plan for Establishing a Network Integrated Biollections Alliance*. The Strategic Plan issues a strong and urgent call for an aggressive, sustained, coordinated, and large-scale effort to digitize the nation's biological collections in order to mobilize their data (including images) through the Internet.

The draft Implementation Plan outlines the actions, timelines, and milestones required to achieve these goals. It was developed by a writing team drawn from the participants in a September 2012 workshop of experts in biollections, digitization, computer science, and other relevant fields. The workshop was co-organized by James Hanken and Lucinda McDade and convened by the American Institute of Biological Sciences, with support from the National Science Foundation.

A draft of the Implementation Plan is now available for public comment at <http://blogs.aibs.org/niba/>. Members of the collections community and other stakeholders are

encouraged to review the plan and submit comments to the comment section of the website or via email to publicpolicy@aibs.org. Comments must be received by 26 November 2012.

EU Launches Initiative to Plan New Biodiversity Data Management System

The European Union has funded a new two year project to lay the groundwork for a biodiversity knowledge management system. Pro-iBiosphere will address interoperability issues, identify data gaps, and plan an efficient system to manage biodiversity information.

The pilot project will focus on data at partner institutions. The initiative will consider how to make the information more widely accessible by linking data to external datasets. Consortium partners include the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in the Netherlands, the Royal Botanical Garden Kew in the United Kingdom, the National Botanic Garden Belgium, and the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem in Germany.

More information is available at <http://www.pro-ibiosphere.eu/>.

Video Explains Implications of the Fiscal Cliff for Science

After a protracted and contentious election, our nation's political leaders now face the daunting task of addressing the fiscal cliff.

Unless lawmakers take action, the policies encompassed in the fiscal cliff will automatically go into effect this January. Included are tax increases and federal budget cuts. Federal science programs would be subject to at least an 8 percent reduction in funding next year—a \$12 billion cut. Although these policies will help to reduce the deficit, they could also harm the nation's fragile economic recovery.

Watch a short video presented by the American Institute of Biological Sciences about the fiscal cliff and how it would impact science: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4GNHJMKRf4>.

Election Results and Science

The culmination of the lengthy 2012 election season has brought some change to Congress. A dozen new Senators and roughly 80 new Representatives will be sworn in as part of the 113th Congress in January. The winners in a handful of other races have yet to be announced.

In the House of Representatives, where all 435 seats were up for election, many lawmakers who are strong supporters of science have been reelected.

- Appropriators Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Chaka Fattah (D-PA), who currently oversee the subcommittee responsible for providing funds for the National Science Foundation,

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other agencies, both return to Congress.

- Representatives Mike Simpson (R-ID) and Jim Moran (D-VA) were reelected; they are currently the top members on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment.
- Congressman and physicist Rush Holt (D-NJ), who is one of only a handful of scientists and engineers in Congress, cruised to victory.
- Former Representative Bill Foster (D-IL) was elected after a two-year hiatus from Congress. Foster is a physicist who previously served one term in the House.

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee can expect major changes based on the election results. Ten of the current 36 committee members will not return to Congress in the new year.

- Representatives Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), Judy Biggert (R-IL), and Chip Cravaack (R-MN) were defeated in the general election.
- Representatives Sandy Adams (R-FL), Hansen Clarke (D-MI), and Ben Quayle (R-AZ) did not win their primary earlier in the year.
- Representative Todd Akin (R-MO) ran unsuccessfully for Senate.
- Three additional committee members are retiring: Representatives Jerry Costello (D-IL), Brad Miller (D-NC), and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA).

In the Senate, only a third of the chamber's 100 seats were up for election. Twenty-one incumbents won reelection.

- The Republican leadership of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee will change in the 113th Congress. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) are retiring. Hutchison is the current ranking member of the full committee. Snowe is the lead Republican on the Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard Subcommittee.
- Science and Space Subcommittee Chair Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) won reelection in what was predicted to be a difficult race.
- Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) easily won her reelection.
- Chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) is retiring in January.
- Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), who chairs the Environment Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife, won reelection.

Despite the anticipated new faces, many aspects of the legislative branch will remain unchanged. Democrats will retain control of the Senate and Republicans will still be the majority party in the House. Moreover, the same issues facing the nation before the election, including the fiscal cliff, unfinished 2013 appropriations, and the looming debt limit, still must be addressed.

Parasitologists Express Concern about National Collection

The American Society of Parasitologists (ASP) has written to government leaders regarding the state of the U.S. National Parasite Collection. The letter calls for action “to avoid further erosion of the museum’s collections, to modernize the holdings and make them more accessible to users through appropriate modern interfaces, to deal with a backlog of material to be accessioned, and to accommodate and safely store parasite genetic material.”

The group calls for an increase in the museum’s \$10,000 annual budget to allow for proper curation of the collection and to address a back-log of 60,000 accessions. Clarity regarding the future of the parasite collection is needed, especially if the collection is to be transferred to another institution. Broader input from the scientific community is also called for.

The National Parasite Collection is the largest parasite collection in the world, and one of only three parasite collections in the United States. The collection is used to study emerging diseases and identify potential controls for invasive species. The collection is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Maryland.

The letter was sent to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsak, administrator of the Agricultural Research Service, and various program leaders within the department. Read the letter from ASP at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=584>.

Graduate Student Leaders Sought to Shape Science Policy

Applications are now being accepted for the 2013 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award. This award recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences who have demonstrated initiative and leadership in science policy. Recipients receive first-hand experience at the interface of science and public policy.

Winners receive:

- A trip to Washington, DC, to participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition Congressional Visits Day, an annual event that brings scientists to the nation’s capital to advocate for federal investment in the biological sciences, with a primary focus on the National Science Foundation. The event will last for two days and will be held in late March or early April 2013. Domestic travel and hotel expenses will be paid for the winners.
- Policy and communications training, and information on trends in federal science funding and the legislative process.
- Meetings with Congressional policymakers to discuss the importance of federal investments in the biological sciences.
- A 1-year AIBS membership, including a subscription to the journal *BioScience* and a copy of “*Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media.*”
- An award certificate and membership in the EPPLA alumni network.

The 2013 award is open to U.S. citizens enrolled in a graduate degree program in the biological sciences, science education, or a closely allied field. Applicants should have a demonstrated

interest in and commitment to science policy and/or science education policy. Prior EPPLA winners and AIBS science policy interns/fellows are not eligible.

Applications are due by 5:00 PM Eastern Time on Monday, 28 January 2013. The award application can be downloaded at <http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/eppla.html>.

NSCA President Speaks about Biodiversity Collections

NSC Alliance President Larry Page participated in a panel discussion on biodiversity collections at the CODATA meeting in Taipei, Taiwan, on 30 October 2012. Discussion centered on the value of collections data to understanding and solving current and emerging policy problems, including natural resource management and loss of biodiversity. The discussion was organized by Melissa Cragin, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, National Science Foundation Directorate for the Biological Sciences. CODATA, the Committee on Data for Science and Technology, held its annual meeting on the topic of open data for a changing planet.

Upcoming NSCA Board Meeting

The NSC Alliance Board of Directors will convene via teleconference on Tuesday, 27 November 2012. Member institutions are welcome to suggest topics for discussion by the board. Suggestions should be submitted to NSC Alliance President Dr. Larry Page at lpage@flmnh.ufl.edu.

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.