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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. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at www.NSCAlliance.org -- it's free!

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.

NSC Alliance Briefs Policymakers

The Natural Science Collections Alliance presented a briefing on digitization of natural history collections for staff of congressional offices, federal agencies, scientific organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The event was held in the Capitol Visitors Center in Washington, DC on 14 December 2015.

Dr. Larry Page, President of NSC Alliance and Director of iDigBio, explained the importance digitization and why it is an important enabling tool for research and education.

Dr. Barbara Thiers, Vice President for Science Administration at the New York Botanical Garden, described how digitized specimen data is helping to inform our understanding of and response to infectious diseases, invasive species, and loss of biodiversity.

Dr. Austin Mast, Director of the Robert K. Godfrey Herbarium at Florida State University, concluded the briefing by discussing how crowdsourcing and citizen science are being used to increase natural history collections digitization while also providing valuable education and training opportunities for the public.

The presentations are available on the NSC Alliance website at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=868>.

In addition to the formal briefing, the NSC Alliance also met with Senate staff to share additional information about the importance of natural history collections across the nation to research, education and informed decision-making.

Looking for more resources? Read the paper from NSC Alliance on "[Biological Specimens Go Online: The New Digital Frontier of Collections.](#)"

Science Programs Boosted in FY 2016 Spending Deal

Congressional leaders have announced that a deal has been struck on appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2016. If enacted, the spending plan would provide new funding for most federal scientific research programs. The 2,000-page piece of legislation would provide funding for the federal government for the remainder of FY 2016, which began on October 1st.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) would receive a 1.6 percent increase above FY 2015, providing the agency with a total budget of \$7.5 billion. Research programs would receive \$100 million of the \$119 million in new funding directed to NSF. Importantly, the bill does not include restrictions on NSF funding for geoscience or social science research that had previously passed the House.

The largest increase among science agencies would be directed to the National Institutes of Health, which would receive an additional \$2 billion (+6.7 percent).

Research at the Department of Agriculture would also increase. Intramural research would grow by 15.1 percent for the Agricultural Research Service. Extramural research funded by the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative would receive an infusion of \$25 million in new funding.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is set to receive a 6 percent increase.

Within the Department of Energy, biological research would receive \$17 million in new support.

At the U.S. Geological Survey, \$1 million in new funding would be directed to ecosystem activities.

The Smithsonian Institution, which is partly funded by the federal government, would receive \$840.2 million, \$20.7 million more than current funding. The Institute of Museum and Library Services would be funded at \$230 million.

Notably, the Environmental Protection Agency was once again on the chopping block. Although the agency's total budget would decline by \$27 million, funding for science would remain at the FY 2015 level.

The omnibus adheres to the budget deal reached in November, which provided an additional \$25 billion to non-defense discretionary programs in FY 2016.

Action Alert: Support Passage of Omnibus, Increased Science Funding

The House of Representatives is expected to vote on the spending package for fiscal year 2016 on Friday. Please take a moment to write to your Representative and Senators to express your support for the science provisions in the bill. It's important for lawmakers to hear from their constituents about the value of federally-funded research. Take action at <http://policy.aibs.org/app/onestep-write-a-letter?5&engagementId=153693>.

Graduate Student Leaders Sought to Shape Science Policy

Are you a science graduate student looking to make a difference in science policy and funding? Applications are being accepted for the 2016 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award. This award, presented by the American Institute of Biological Sciences, 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 be held in spring 2016. Domestic travel and hotel expenses will be paid for the winners.

- Policy and communications training, including information on the legislative process and trends in federal science funding.
- Meetings with congressional policymakers to discuss the importance of federal investments in the biological sciences.
- A one-year AIBS membership, including a subscription to the journal *BioScience* and a copy of "Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media."

The 2016 award is open to U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents 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 11:59 PM Eastern Time on Sunday, 10 January 2016. The application can be downloaded at <http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/eppla.html>.

Upcoming NAGPRA Training Sessions

Training sessions are being offered by the National Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program on compliance with the law and on grant writing.

“Preparing for and Writing Grant Proposals”

Phoenix, AZ — January 27-28, 2016

Advanced rate registration by: December 18

Deadline to register: January 13

“NAGPRA Essentials”

Anchorage, AK — February 2, 2016

Advanced rate registration by: December 23

Deadline to register: January 19

“Preparing for and Writing Grant Proposals”

Anchorage, AK — February 3-4, 2016

Advanced rate registration by: December 23

Deadline to register: January 19

“NAGPRA Essentials”

Honolulu, HI — March 2, 2016

Advanced rate registration by: January 20

Deadline to register: February 17

Learn more at <http://www.npi.org/register.html>.

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.

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact spotter@aibs.org.