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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.

Senate Panel Approves NSF Budget with No New Research Funding

Legislation approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 21, 2016 would provide \$46.3 million in new funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fiscal year 2017. In spite of the proposed increase for the agency, funding for NSF research and science education programs would remain at the 2016 levels.

The new funding would be directed to the acquisition of three research vessels. Notably, NSF had only requested funding for two ships, not three. The proposed ships will meet the ocean science needs identified in a 2015 report from the National Academies of Science.

In adopting the 2017 spending bill, appropriators rejected a request from the Obama Administration for \$400 million in new mandatory spending to support early career researchers.

The committee report that accompanied the bill contained language that many in the scientific community will find unwelcome. “As part of the peer review process, NSF should include criteria that evaluates how a proposal will advance our Nation's national security and economic interests, as well as promote the of [sic] progress of science and innovation in the United States.”

This language parallels an effort by House Science, Space, and Technology Committee

Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) to require NSF to publish written justifications for each award it makes in order to ensure that the agency is supporting grants that are in the “national interest.” The House of Representatives passed Smith’s bill, HR 3293, in February 2016.

BCoN Releases Collections Communications Report

A new report from the Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) outlines actions the community should take to better communicate with and engage the public, decision-makers, and other stakeholders.

Biological diversity collections leaders, scientists, communications professionals, and scientific organization leaders met at The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago for a workshop organized by the Biodiversity Collections Network. The *Collections Communications Workshop* was convened to consider and offer recommendations about: 1) Opportunities and barriers to communicating the benefits of biodiversity collections to decision-makers and the public; 2) Opportunities provided by national digitization initiatives to engage new stakeholders; 3) Existing communication resources and the need to develop new tools and resources; and, 4) Development of a networked community of communications professionals that could collaborate to deliver a proactive message about biodiversity and biodiversity collections to the public.

“Workshop participants were clear: The time for business as usual has passed,” said Dr. Robert Gropp, Interim Co-Executive Director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the workshop organizer. “Threats to biodiversity are increasing. There is a real concern that the scientific community does not have the resources necessary to answer important questions.”

This concern has been reinforced recently as state and federal agencies have reduced or withdrawn support for biodiversity collections. The biodiversity community has responded to these developments in ways similar to those envisioned by workshop participants. The responses have been reactive, however, and not proactive.

“These developments show how important it is that we do a better job of communicating about both the increased demand for spatial and temporal data on biodiversity and the vitally important research that biodiversity collections enable,” said Dr. Joseph Cook, President of the Natural Science Collections Alliance and Director of the Museum of Southwestern Biology at the University of New Mexico. “The report includes a number of significant recommendations for the Natural Science Collections Alliance and we are eager to begin addressing these in collaboration with our membership and partners.”

The Biodiversity Collections Network is establishing a working group to refine and implement the seven recommendations that emerged from its workshop and that are outlined in its new report, “Building a More Networked System for Communicating about Natural History Collections.” These recommendations are:

1. The community must articulate a compelling and inclusive long-term vision for natural history collections.

2. The community should work with an existing community-serving organization with links to administrators, policymakers, and communicators to foster greater coordination of targeted messages.
3. The community must engage new stakeholders to increase the sustainability (i.e., new funding, proper institutional support, adequate workforce) of digitization efforts.
4. The community must do a better job of communicating outcomes and benefits of digitization efforts to policymakers, administrators, other scientists, and the public.
5. The community must develop metrics for assessing the impact of current and new communication tools and practices.
6. The community must develop and embrace innovative communication methods and tool kits.
7. The community must support and engage in communications training programs that help all biodiversity collections stakeholders, particularly scientists, become more effective spokespeople for natural history collections.

For more information about the Biodiversity Collections Network and to read “Building a More Networked System for Communicating about Natural History Collections,” please visit <https://bcon.aibs.org/resources/collections-communications-workshop-report/>.

Continued Coverage of CSBR Hiatus

The Albuquerque Journal has published an in depth article about the impacts of the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) funding hiatus for collections. The article focuses on the Museum of Southwestern Biology, which is part of the University of New Mexico and is the recipient of several grants from the Collections in Support of Biological Research (CSBR) program. The museum is also a member of NSC Alliance.

Dr. Jon Dunnam, the museum’s senior collections manager for mammals told the newspaper: “This one makes no sense at all, because a lot of the new programs that are coming out of NSF ... are going to be relying on collections like this to take care of all the specimens that come out of these new initiatives... This is the kind of biological infrastructure that is absolutely going to be necessary going forward.”

The article also reported on the letter sent by NSC Alliance, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections to NSF that objected to the funding hiatus.

Read the article at <http://www.abqjournal.com/762853/news/collection-at-risk.html>.

Fire Destroys Museum in Delhi

As reported by the BBC on April 26, 2016, the National Museum of Natural History in Delhi, India was destroyed in a fire of unknown origins.

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said: “This is a real loss. This loss cannot be counted in rupees. Some very old species of flora and fauna were there.”

Preliminary reports from fire officials indicate that the building’s “fire safety mechanisms were not working.”

Valuing Our “Endangered” Natural History

An op-ed published in the *New York Times* on April 1, 2016 extolls the unsung virtues of natural history collections.

“Natural history museums are so focused on the future that they have for centuries routinely preserved such specimens to answer questions they didn’t yet know how to ask, requiring methodologies that had not yet been invented, to make discoveries that would have been, for the original collectors, inconceivable,” wrote Richard Conniff, author of the column.

Read the article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/opinion/ournatural-history-endangered.html>.

NSC Alliance at IsoBank Workshop

NSC Alliance President Joseph Cook was among the approximately two-dozen people who gathered at the Sevilleta Field Station south of Albuquerque, New Mexico last week to explore the potential for the development of an IsoBank – a database for isotopic data. The workshop, cosponsored by the Biodiversity Collections Network, brought together a diverse group of ecologists, archaeologists, biodiversity scientists, database experts, journal editors, and museum officials from around the world to discuss how this new data resource might be constructed, and how it might be built with linkages to specimens and data held in natural science collections, among other issues. A white paper will be produced by workshop organizers.

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) has launched the 6th Annual Faces of Biology Photo Contest. The competition recognizes scientists who use imagery to communicate aspects of biological research to the public and policymakers.

The theme of the contest is “Faces of Biology.” Photographs entered into the competition must depict a person, such as a scientist, technician, or student, engaging in biological research. The research may occur outside, in a lab, at a natural history collection, at a field station, on a computer, in a classroom, or anywhere else research is done.

The First Place Winner will have his/her winning photo featured on the cover of *BioScience*, and will receive \$250 and a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*.

The Second and Third Place Winners will have his/her winning photo printed inside the journal, and will receive a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*.

The winning photo from the 2015 contest is featured on the cover of the March 2016 issue of *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on September 30, 2016. For more information or to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

National NAGPRA Program Seeks Grants Management Specialist

This position is located in the National NAGPRA Program, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

The National NAGPRA Program fulfills some of the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities regarding implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), NAGPRA potentially impacts the activities of all Federal agencies, States, and institutions that receive Federal funds and all Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. The primary duties of the position involve technical review of notices submitted by Federal agencies and museums that have compliance obligations under NAGPRA and coordinating the programmatic aspects of the National NAGPRA grant program.

This position is being advertised for candidates with Merit Promotion eligibility (Status Candidates) and for candidates without Merit Promotion eligibility. It can be found on www.usajobs.gov. For Status Candidates, search for Vacancy Announcement number NPS-WASO-16-1671677(KB) or by title/series and location. For all US Citizens, search for Vacancy Announcement number NPS-WASO-16-1672985(KB) or by title/series and location.

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.