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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.

President Trump's Budget Request Would Cut Billions from Science

On 23 May, the White House released the details of its fiscal year 2018 budget request. The plan continued to call for steep cuts first outlined in the 'skinny budget' released in March. Billions of dollars would be cut from science programs, including from every major source of federal funding for biological research.

Most federal research programs are facing cuts on the order of 10 percent or more.

- Science and Technology within the Environmental Protection Agency would be cut by \$255.7 million (-36.2 percent). Extramural STAR research grants would be eliminated, as would "voluntary" climate change programs. Sustainable Communities, which includes research on ecosystem services, would be cut by nearly 60 percent.
- Funding for the National Institutes of Health would be reduced by \$7.4 billion (-22.2 percent). The budget request assumes that Congress will provide the full \$496 million authorized for the agency in the 21st Century Cures Act. The funding rate for research grants would decline to less than 14 percent. The Administration also proposes to reduce the reimbursement rate for grantees' indirect costs.
- Funding for the Agricultural Research Service (excluding facilities) would be cut by \$237.1 million (-20.3 percent). Seventeen laboratories or work sites would be closed.

- The Department of Energy Office of Science would be cut by \$919.5 million (-17.1 percent). A 43 percent cut from Biological and Environmental Research is proposed.
- The Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy would be terminated.
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would lose \$900.1 million (-15.9 percent), including large cuts from research. The Sea Grant program and Office of Education would be eliminated.
- The U.S. Geological Survey's budget would be cut by \$163.0 million (-15.0 percent). The Ecosystems mission area would lose 17.3 percent, including the termination or significant reduction of several research programs.
- The National Science Foundation would lose \$819.3 million (-11.0 percent). Biological sciences research would be cut by 9.7 percent overall. Graduate research fellowships and funding for states that receive less federal research funding—the EPSCoR program—would be cut heavily.
- Forest and Rangeland Research within the U.S. Forest Service is facing a \$29.5 million cut (-10.2 percent).
- Science Support within the Fish and Wildlife Service would be eliminated.
- Competitively awarded agricultural research grants would lose \$25.7 million (-6.9 percent).
- Science within the National Aeronautics and Space Administration would be cut by \$53.1 million (-0.9 percent), but Earth Science would experience deeper cuts, including the termination of five research missions. NASA's education program would be eliminated.
- The Institute of Museum and Library Services would be terminated.

The President's budget request is just the first step in the annual appropriations process. Congress is responsible for writing the 12 appropriations bills that collectively fund the federal government.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said that the President's budget request is “a statement of their priorities, that is not necessarily ours.”

Biology Community to Congress: Reject Budget, Fund Science

A letter to Congress calls for lawmakers to reject the deep cuts to research and science education proposed in President Trump's fiscal year 2018 budget request.

“The budget cuts outlined by the Administration for 2018 would set back American innovation for years. Funding rates for programs that support foundational biological research are already extremely low, with roughly four out of five research proposals rejected by the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. The proposed budget would slash these funding rates even further for researchers at universities, colleges, marine labs, field stations, biological collections, and other non-profit research centers. Research conducted at federal labs would be harmed by likely staff reductions and cuts to research budgets.”

The letter was signed by the NSC Alliance and 40 other scientific organizations.

Read the letter at https://www.aibs.org/position-statements/20170523_multisociety_letter.html.

NSC Alliance Weighs in on Federal Funding for Collections

The NSC Alliance has provided testimony to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees regarding funding for certain programs that curate natural history collections. The testimony addressed programs within the Department of the Interior and Smithsonian Institution.

NSC Alliance stated, in part: “Scientific collections are critical infrastructure for our nation’s research enterprise. Research specimens connect us to the past, are used to solve current societal problems, and are helping to predict threats to human health, methods for ensuring food security, and the impact of future environmental changes. Sustained investments in scientific collections are critical for our nation’s continued scientific leadership.”

Read the NSC Alliance fiscal year 2018 Interior testimony at <http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/owt-interior-house-fy18-nsc-final.pdf>.

NSC Alliance Members Invited to Interact With Lawmakers This Summer

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is pleased to announce that Alliance members are eligible to participate in the 2017 Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. This national initiative is an opportunity for scientists across the country to meet with their federal or state elected officials to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

There is a pressing need for the scientific community to engage with policymakers about the value of natural history collections in research and education. As called for in the recent report from the Biodiversity Collections Network, “The community must do a better job of communicating outcomes and benefits of digitization efforts to policymakers, administrators, other scientists, and the public.”

The Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event enables scientists, curators, museum professionals, and graduate students to meet with their elected officials without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite an elected official to tour their research facility or can meet at the lawmaker’s local office. Meetings will take place mid-July through October, depending on the participant’s schedule.

NSC Alliance members who participate will receive one-on-one support and online training to prepare them for their tour or meeting.

The event is open to all types of natural science collections, including biological, geological, and anthropological collections.

Participation is free for NSC Alliance member organizations, but registration will close on July 18, 2017. To register, visit https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

House Science Committee Considers NSF Indirect Costs

Payments to universities and other entities that conduct federally sponsored research were the focus of a recent hearing by the House Science Committee.

So-called indirect costs are not directly identifiable with a specific research project, but are required for an organization to do the research. Examples of indirect costs include laboratory occupancy costs, libraries, IT, data transmission and storage, administration, and compliance with federal regulations.

Subcommittee Chair Barbara Comstock (R-VA) called indirect costs “legitimate and necessary,” but expressed the view that the system is overly complex. Presently, every institution negotiates its own indirect cost rate with the government, which range from less than 1 percent to more than 60 percent. “It raises a question of whether we have created a system of haves and have-nots, where wealthy institutions benefit the most,” said Comstock.

Ranking Member Dan Lipinski (D-IL) countered with evidence that reimbursed rates are 19 percent lower than negotiated rates.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) spent \$1.3 billion last year on indirect costs, about one-fifth of its total research budget. The percentage of NSF’s funding spent on indirect costs has been relatively stable since 2000.

NSF negotiates indirect cost rates for about 5 percent of its awardees. These are largely non-profits, such as research centers, scientific societies, and museums. All other grantees’ rates are negotiated by other federal agencies.

Some lawmakers on the panel accused universities of making a profit on federally supported research because of reimbursement of indirect costs. One witness, who represented Duke University, said that the university loses money on research. “We absorb every incremental dollar of administrative or compliance activities... We’re not making money on the research endeavor whatsoever.”

NAGPRA Review Committee Suspended

More than 200 advisory panels for the Department of the Interior have been temporarily suspended, including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee. Committee meetings previously scheduled for July and August have been postponed.

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke put all outside committees on hiatus as he reviews their charters and missions. Other impacted committees include the Bureau of Land Management's 38 resource advisory councils, as well as the National Park System Advisory Board, National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board, and North Slope Science Initiative Technical Advisory Panel.

An Interior spokesperson said the review of "the charter and charge of each Board/Advisory Committee" is designed to "maximize feedback from these boards and ensure their compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act."

The review process has halted meetings of these groups through at least September 2017. Moreover, the appointment and nomination process for the NAGPRA Review Committee has been postponed until further notice. Two nominations are currently pending: one tribal position and the at-large position. One of the museum and scientific nominated positions will become vacant in November 2017.

NSC Alliance Board of Directors to Meet in Denver, Prior to Director's Summit

The NSC Alliance Board of Directors will meet on June 18, 2017 in Denver, Colorado. The board meeting precedes a one-day Director's Summit meeting co-organized by NSC Alliance. More information about the Summit meeting is available [here](#). The Summit meeting also precedes the annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

NSC Alliance members interested in learning more about the NSC Alliance board meeting should contact NSC Alliance president Dr. Joseph Cook.

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.