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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 <http://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](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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### **Action Alert: Ask Senators to Support NSF**

Congress is now considering funding levels for federal programs for fiscal year (FY) 2019. Scientists interested in the National Science Foundation (NSF) should consider contacting their Senators to ask that they sign a Dear Colleague letter lead by Senator Markey (D-MA). The letter requests Congress provide NSF with \$8.45 billion in FY 2019.

NSF is the primary federal funding source for fundamental biological research at our nation's universities and colleges. The agency provides approximately 68% of extramural federal support for non-medical, fundamental biological research at academic institutions.

The proposed funding level of \$8.45 billion would allow NSF to expand support for early career researchers and to create new interdisciplinary research programs. Moreover, this investment would sustain existing research and education programs that are vital to U.S. competitiveness.

Interested individuals can send a letter to their Senators from the AIBS [Legislative Action Center](#).

## **NSC Alliance Hosts USGS Budget Briefing Webinar**

The Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) has arranged for Anne Kinsinger, Associate Director for Ecosystems at the United States Geological Survey (USGS), to provide information about the administration's fiscal year 2019 budget request for the division. The Ecosystems program at the USGS is responsible for research and monitoring on freshwater, terrestrial, and marine ecosystems, and the human, fish, and wildlife communities they support.

The webinar, co-hosted by AIBS, will be held from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eastern time on Friday, April 13, 2018.

This webinar program is free, but pre-registration is required. Click [here](#) to register.

## **White House Science Accomplishments Report Receives Skeptical Response**

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), which still lacks a director, released a report on March 7, 2018 on the Trump administration's science and technology progress in its first year.

The report provides “a selection of the tremendous science and technology achievements” of the administration and highlights activities ranging from “energy dominance” to scientific discovery. The document states that, “The Trump Administration is committed to advancing technological development and conducting research and development (R&D) to ensure national security, grow the economy, create well-paying jobs, and improve the lives of Americans across this great nation.” OSTP's analysis highlights activities such as an executive order establishing the American Technology Council and updating federal policies for automated vehicles. The document does not mention climate change but touts the eight National Science Foundation (NSF)-supported scientists who won Nobel Prizes.

Other highlights include the White House's plan to create a new Science and Technology Enterprise Committee as a part of the restructuring of the National Science and Technology Council in order to better align the priorities of the council with the administration. According to E&E News, the committee will be co-chaired by the Department of Energy's science undersecretary and the directors of NSF and National Institute for Standards and Technology. Internal documents note that the committee will help to address issues such as “expanding technology transfer, strengthening contributions of federal scientific collections to priority areas of national interest like infectious diseases, biosecurity, and food security, reducing administrative burdens on federally funded researchers, and modernizing research infrastructure to support our national innovation base.”

The report also claims that the President's fiscal year 2018 budget request increased federal funding for R&D but is silent on proposed cuts to climate programs and research efforts at the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, and other agencies. This silence spurred criticism from segments of the scientific community.

A former OSTP staffer under President Obama, Kumar Garg, called the report “deeply misleading” and said that the proposed cuts would hinder American scientific progress and competitiveness. He explained that the administration used an altered definition of research and development in its estimates, therefore not accurately representing the proposed funding decreases in the report. The report has also received criticism from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Union of Concerned Scientists for its inaccuracies.

President Trump has yet to name a science adviser and OSTP currently has about 50 staff members, roughly one-third of the number at the end of the Obama administration.

### **Marine Ecologist to Receive NSB’s Vannevar Bush Award**

The National Science Board (NSB) has announced that Dr. Jane Lubchenco, distinguished university professor and marine studies advisor to the President at Oregon State University, will receive the 2018 Vannevar Bush Award. The award recognizes lifetime achievement for pursuits to improve the welfare of mankind and the nation through public-service activities in science, technology and public policy.

Lubchenco is an environmental scientist and marine ecologist with experience in science, academia, as well as government. She has a diverse background in ecology, zoology, marine biology, ocean management, and public policy.

Lubchenco’s work has contributed extensively to the field of ecology as well as stimulated public engagement from the scientific community. She served as Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and on President Obama’s Science Team (2009-2013).

Dr. Lubchenco will be presented with the Vannevar Bush Award during the National Science Foundation Annual Awards Ceremony on May 2nd held in Washington, D.C.

### **Congress Approves FY 2018 Omnibus Appropriations, Rejects President’s Cuts to Science**

Congress has passed and the President has signed a bipartisan appropriations bill with \$1.3 trillion in federal spending for fiscal year (FY) 2018. The House voted 256-167 and the Senate voted 65-32 to approve the bill that distributes funding for the remainder of FY 2018. The omnibus appropriations legislation provides either increased or level spending for science agencies, ignoring the deep cuts proposed by the President.

Congressional leaders announced an agreement late on 21 March after several weeks of negotiations and six months into FY 2018. A majority of environmental riders were dropped from the final bill.

The bill funds the National Science Foundation (NSF) at \$7.8 billion, \$295 million above the FY 2017 enacted level, with the Research and Related Activities (RRA) accounts funded at \$6.3

billion (+\$301 million). The RRA line includes funding for the various research directorates, including the biological sciences directorate. Details are not yet available for how these funds would be allocated. The bill states “this strong investment in basic research reflects the Congress' growing concern that China and other competitors are outpacing the United States in terms of research spending.”

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will receive \$37 billion, a boost of \$3 billion, rejecting the President’s proposed 22 percent cut to the agency. The bill includes \$1.8 billion (+\$414 million) for Alzheimer’s research.

The omnibus provides funding increases for many agencies and programs at the Department of the Interior (DOI). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is funded at \$1.6 billion (+\$75 million) with the legislation prioritizing funding for addressing the endangered species delisting backlog, combating invasive species, preventing illegal wildlife trafficking, and preventing closure of fish hatcheries.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), slated for a 15 percent cut under the President’s request, will be funded at \$1.1 billion, an increase of \$63 million over FY 2017 levels. Funding will be targeted to critical infrastructure investments in natural hazards programs, stream gages, the groundwater monitoring network, and mapping activities. The legislation provides \$23 million for early earthquake early warning systems and \$26 million for funding the development of “Landsat 9” – a satellite program that provides land use measurements important for agriculture, forestry, energy and water resource decisions. The agency’s eight climate science centers will remain functional. The White House had proposed eliminating half of them.

The President’s FY 2018 request called for the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) budget to be cut by 30 percent. The appropriations bill, however, provides level funding to the agency at \$8.1 billion. EPA’s regulatory programs will be cut by \$23.5 million. Funding for cleanup of Superfund sites will get a \$66 million boost. The bill also includes \$2.9 billion for Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan funds and \$63 million for Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act to support for water infrastructure projects. The bill emphasizes the Administration’s goal to “rein in outdated, unnecessary and potentially harmful regulations at the EPA” and includes riders prohibiting the agency from regulating lead content of ammunition. EPA's science and technology programs will be supported at a flat budget of \$116 million, rejecting the administration’s proposed \$30.8 million cut to the program.

A report that accompanies the bill indicates that the legislation "does not include any requested funds for workforce reshaping" at the EPA. President Trump's proposal would have allowed EPA to extract about \$68 million from various programs for the reshaping effort, to be implemented through buyouts. The bill also limits the agency’s reorganization and restructuring efforts to \$1 million.

The Energy and Water portion of the spending bill, which funds the Department of Energy (DOE) and Army Corps of Engineers, received \$43.2 billion, an increase of \$4.7 billion. DOE will receive across the board funding increases, including for research efforts and energy efficiency programs. DOE’s Office of Science will see a 16 percent or \$800 million funding

boost to a record \$6.26 billion. An increase of \$163 million is targeted for advanced scientific computing research, a priority of the President. The Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) program, slated for elimination in the President's budget, will receive a record level funding of \$353 million (+\$47 million).

Agricultural research programs, including the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), will receive \$3.03 billion, an increase of \$138 million over FY 2017. The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is funded at \$400 million. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is funded at \$6 billion, with \$2.8 billion targeted at wildfire prevention and suppression. The USFS received \$6.07 billion in FY 2017.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will receive \$5.9 billion, a slight increase of \$234 million above FY 2017 level, with the funding prioritized for National Weather Service (\$1 billion), fisheries operations (\$883 million), weather research, and ocean exploration.

The Smithsonian Institution will receive \$1 billion in funding, an increase of \$178 million, allowing all on-going operations to continue.

### **Call for Ideas: Curb the Spread of Misinformation**

The Rita Allen Foundation and RTI International are organizing a call for ideas to curb the spread of misinformation that is able to spread rapidly in the current climate as a result of social media and the internet. The call solicits interventions focused on “reducing behaviors that lead to the spread of misinformation or encouraging behaviors that can lead to the minimization of its influence.” Proposals for interventions with technological, educational, and/or community-based components as well as projects that involve science communication, public health, and diverse populations are encouraged.

Up to five ideas will be selected and featured in the Misinformation Solutions Forum, which will be held at the Aspen Institute in Washington, D.C. on October 4, 2018. At the forum, two teams will be selected to receive Misinformation Solution Prizes of \$50,000 and \$25,000.

Submissions are due by 11:59 p.m. PDT on May 31, 2018. Inquiries about the submission and selection process should be directed to [MisinformationSolutions@ritaallen.org](mailto:MisinformationSolutions@ritaallen.org).

Read more details about the call for ideas [here](#).

### **BCoN Announces 2018 Webinar Series**

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) will convene a series of webinar programs in 2018 to share information about BCoN activities with the community and to receive community input on prior and pending BCoN programs. These webinars will include a formal presentation

followed by an opportunity for participants to ask questions and share information. All programs will be recorded and posted to the BCoN website.

The first webinar, titled *NIBA: A Status Report from BCoN*, will be held 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eastern time on April 25, 2018. In 2017, BCoN convened a two-day workshop of biodiversity collections community stakeholders to review community progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic and Implementation Plans for a Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance (NIBA). This webinar will summarize the findings from that workshop.

Click [here](#) for more information regarding the webinar series and to register.

### **Enter the 2018 Faces of Biology Photo Contest**

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest for your chance to win \$250 and to have your photo appear on the cover of the journal *BioScience*.

The competition, sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), 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 researcher, technician, collections curator, or student, engaging in research. The research may occur outside, in a lab, with 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 along with 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 2017 contest is featured on the cover of the April 2018 issue of *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 1 October 2018.

For more information or to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

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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](http://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 [dbosnjak@aibs.org](mailto:dbosnjak@aibs.org).