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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.

NSC Alliance 2019 Collections Policy and Advocacy Meeting: Register Now

Registration is now open for the NSC Alliance 2019 membership meeting, Collections Policy and Advocacy. The meeting will be held in Washington, DC, on April 2-3, 2019. Learn more about the meeting, including a draft agenda, and register at http://nscalliance.org/?page_id=1084. All NSC Alliance member institutions are encouraged to participate. In addition to being an opportunity for NSC Alliance members to network and exchange information with each other, this meeting provides a platform for the community to interact with federal program officers and lawmakers. The meeting will explore opportunities for the community to work collectively to promote new investments in natural science collections, and opportunities to inform or reform policies impacting collections. NSC Alliance members are also invited to share information about initiatives or programs at their institutions. Information about submitting an abstract is available on the meeting website.

Questions about the meeting can be directed to Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org or 202-628-1500 x 250.

Costs Mount as Government Shutdown Drags On

As government offices and research facilities across the country remain shuttered and services delayed or interrupted, the partial government shutdown that has resulted in 800,000 federal workers being furloughed or forced to work without pay has accomplished one thing – it has set a new record for how long the President and Congress have failed to govern the country.

The costs associated with the shutdown continue to grow. Beyond the pain inflicted on federal workers, contractors, and grantees, economists now estimate that the shutdown is having real and significant negative effects on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Kevin Hassett, Chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, now estimates that the shutdown will reduce quarterly economic growth by 0.13 percentage point each week. Hassett doubled his forecast after initially underestimating the economic impact of the shutdown. To put things into perspective, the economic growth in the first quarter of 2018 was 2.2 percent. Other economists also predict losses in the first quarter of 2019, including New York Federal Reserve President John Williams, who thinks the shutdown could cut quarterly U.S. economic growth by 1 percentage point. In an interview earlier this week, Hassett conceded that 0.0 first quarter growth is a real possibility. There are also a growing number of warnings of a new recession.

Prior to and subsequent to the shutdown, Congress endeavored to pass appropriations to fund the government. Prior to the beginning of the 116th Congress in January, the House and Senate were poised to pass bipartisan appropriations legislation only to have the effort thwarted by the President who at the eleventh hour said he would veto the measure. Rather than passing the legislation and forcing the President to carry out his veto threat, Congress capitulated. Congressional Republicans allowed the government to shutdown to force a standoff between the President and congressional Democrats at the start of the 116th Congress – a shutdown the President famously announced from the Oval Office that he would own. Upon taking control of the House of Representatives in January, Democrats approved appropriations legislation – the measures previously unanimously approved by the Senate in December, only to have Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) refuse to bring the measure to a vote in the Senate. Senator McConnell is now working on legislation that would fund all agencies in exchange for \$5.7 billion in border wall money and other immigration reforms, based on a proposal put forth by the President. The measure, however, includes poison pills ensuring that Democrats will not support the plan. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), however, dismissed the President's proposal and insists that any negotiations on immigration and border legislation take place only after the government is funded and back to work.

The budget impasse is a threat to science, with shuttered federal agencies unable to award grants until they are funded again. Research conducted by a significant number of federal agencies has also come to a halt or is significantly limited. Currently, the shutdown directly affects the National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Institutes of Standards and Technology, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Smithsonian Institution, State Department, Census Bureau, United States Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, among others.

Efforts to highlight the negative impacts on science have sprung up on social media, where stories are being shared at #ScienceNotShutdown and #ShutdownBugsMe (a tag presumably initiated by the Entomological Society of America). NSC Alliance members are encouraged to share your stories with NSC Alliance via these hashtags.

The scientific community is also increasingly warning of the long-term negative effects of the shutdown. On January 18, 2019, the American Institute of Biological Sciences issued a [statement](#) warning: “This shutdown is irresponsible and it is doing real harm to people, the economy, and science... It is past time to open the government. Political fights over a wall can be conducted without destroying the morale of public servants, threatening people's well-being, and damaging the economy. It is reprehensible to demand that federal workers be called to work without pay simply to mask the real negative impacts of this failure to govern.”

On January 23, 2019, the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) – a large coalition of scientific societies and universities that advocates for the National Science Foundation – sent a letter to the President and congressional leaders warning of the effects of the continuing shutdown. The letter urged the President and Congress to promptly fund the government and to provide the National Science Foundation with at least \$8.175 billion for fiscal year (FY) 2019.

Opportunity for NSC Alliance Members to Inform Future of Biodiversity Collections Research, Policy, and Education

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a founding partner organization in the Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN), a National Science Foundation funded Research Coordination Network. A number of representatives of NSC Alliance members recently participated in a BCoN workshop convened on 30 October – 1 November 2018 at Oak Spring Gardens in Upperville, Virginia. The purpose of the workshop was to draft a future-focused vision document for the deployment of data held in U.S. biodiversity collections for research, policy, and education.

BCoN is accepting community feedback on this draft document through 1 February 2019. NSC Alliance members are encouraged to review the document and to provide feedback. The document, supporting materials, and instructions for submitting comments are available at <https://bcon.aibs.org/2019/01/16/community-input-requested-extending-u-s-biodiversity-collections-to-address-national-challenges/>.

Update on NEON Biorepository Rolling Launch

In August 2018, Arizona State University's (ASU) Biollections and Biodiversity Knowledge Integration Center was selected by the [National Ecological Observatory Network \(NEON\)](#) leadership to be the NEON Biorepository, potentially for the full 30-year duration of the project. More information about the rolling launch of the NEON Biorepository is now available [online](#).

The NEON Biorepository represents a unique collection of biological samples with more than 100,000 samples of 40-45 types collected on an annual basis. These samples are directly tied to the research design and purpose of the NEON project to facilitate long-term ecological monitoring/forecasting on a continental scale. Therefore, the available specimens will be representative of populations and communities and associated with high-resolution environmental data. The samples are expected and need to be used now and very frequently to fulfill their scientific and societal promise.

Researchers interested in using the NEON Biorepository samples are encouraged to reach out to Nico Franz at nico.franz@asu.edu. Additionally, the link below provides answers to several questions about the NEON Biorepository (e.g. location, accessing samples, personnel, etc.), and how it is similar and different from other collections.

<https://biokic.asu.edu/blog/neon-biorepository-rolling-launch-update>

Science in the New Congress

On January 3, 2019, 111 freshmen, including 10 newly elected Senators and 101 newly elected Representatives, were sworn-in to the 116th Congress. Eleven of these freshmen members of Congress, including eight Democrats and three Republicans, have a background in science, medicine, or technology.

Below is a summary of expertise that has joined the new Congress.

- Representative Joe Cunningham (D-SC) is a former ocean engineer, who earned his BS from Florida Atlantic University and also holds a law degree.
- Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL), is a registered nurse. She holds master's degrees in nursing and public health from Johns Hopkins University and served as a Senior Advisor at the Department of Health and Human Services under the Obama Administration.
- Representative John Joyce (R-PA), is a dermatologist.
- Representative Kim Schrier (D-WA) worked as a pediatrician and has a bachelor's degree in astrophysics.
- Representative Sean Casten (D-IL) is a biochemist and a former cancer researcher. Casten has also worked on clean energy technology.
- Representative Kevin Hern (R-OK) is a businessman with a degree in aerospace engineering.
- Representative T.J. Cox (D-CA) is a chemical engineer.
- Representative Elaine Luria (D-VA) is an engineer with experience in operating nuclear reactors in the Navy.
- Representative Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA) is an engineer who worked on air and space defense technologies in the U.S. Air Force.
- Representative Mark Green (R-TN) is a former Army physician.
- Representative Jeff Van Drew (D-NJ) is a dentist.

Turmoil at NEON as Advisory Panel Disbanded, Reinstated

Battelle Memorial Institute, a nonprofit government-contractor that manages the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) for the National Science Foundation (NSF), has reinstated a NEON science advisory panel that it had disbanded a week earlier.

The twenty-member Science, Technology, and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC), which is comprised of external scientists who advise NEON, was disbanded by Battelle soon after NEON's Chief Scientist and Principal Investigator, Sharon Collinge, resigned over the firing of two senior managers without her knowledge. Some members of the panel had threatened to resign in support of Collinge.

Battelle's decision to dissolve STEAC met with dissent from panel members, who penned a [letter](#) asking Battelle to reinstate the advisory panel. According to a report by *Science*, Ankur Desai, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and a member of STEAC, said that Battelle "just burned some of the most prominent ecologists in the country... This has put the project at massive risk."

This outcry prompted Battelle to reinstate the panel. An apology was issued by a Battelle official, who invited panel members to meet with the project's Acting Chief Scientist, Eugene Kelly. "My decision to dissolve the STEAC was based on my erroneous assumption that such advisory bodies were routinely reconstituted at the change of leadership of NSF large facilities," stated Michael Kuhlman, Battelle's Chief Scientist. "That was incorrect, and I accept full responsibility for my error."

NEON is an 81-site U.S. ecological research facility, which collects and provides data from ecosystems across the United States. NEON is currently transitioning into operation as its construction nears completion. Battelle was awarded the contract to manage NEON in 2016, after NSF removed the original contractor.

Participate in 2019 Congressional Visits Day

NSC Alliance members are invited to participate in the 2019 Congressional Visits Day organized by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS). The event will be held on March 27, with supplemental training available on March 25-26.

The event allows you to meet with your members of Congress to help them understand the important role the federal government plays in supporting the biological sciences. Advocate for federal investments in biological sciences research supported by the National Science Foundation and other federal agencies.

Participants will complete a communications and advocacy training program provided by AIBS that prepares them to be effective advocates for their science. AIBS also provides participants

with background information and materials, as well as arranges meetings with lawmakers. On March 27, scientists will participate in meetings with their Representative and Senators.

Supplemental training program: In conjunction with the 2019 AIBS Congressional Visits Day, AIBS is offering its highly acclaimed Communications Boot Camp for Scientists. This professional development training course will be offered on March 25-26. All participants who complete the course will receive a certificate of completion indicating that they have successfully completed 12 hours of communications training. This professional development training program provides practical instruction and interactive exercises designed to help scientists (e.g. researchers, graduate students, professionals, educators) translate scientific information for non-technical audiences and to effectively engage with decision-makers and the news media. As affiliate members of AIBS, NSC Alliance members can register for the training at a discounted rate.

Scientists and graduate students who are interested in communicating the importance of federal investments in scientific research and education to lawmakers are encouraged to participate in this important event.

Express your interest in participating in the event by registering. Registration will close on February 8, 2019. Space is limited and it may not be possible to accommodate the participation of all interested individuals.

Register at: https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_visits_day.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 dbosnjak@aibs.org.