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In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance Nominates Members to NAGPRA Review Committee
- Collections and Bioeconomy Are Priorities, Says White House OSTP
- Senate Begins Work on FY 2020 Appropriations
- OSTP Director Outlines Plan to Address Research Security
- NSB Calls for Growing the Skilled Technical Workforce
- New ESA Rules Effective September 26
- OSTP Seeks Public Input on U.S. Bioeconomy
- Nominations Sought for NSB Awards
- NAGPRA Review Committee to Meet in October
- National Fossil Day is October 16
- Last Chance to Register: AIBS Communications Boot Camp for Scientists

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 Nominates Members to NAGPRA Review Committee

The Natural Science Collections Alliance has nominated Dr. Heather Joy Hecht Edgar and Ms. Linda Lee K. (Cissy) Farm, Esq. to serve on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee.

The NAGPRA was enacted in 1990 to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American cultural items, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The law requires museums to compile certain information regarding Native American cultural items in their possession or control and provide that information to lineal descendants and the National NAGPRA Program to support repatriation. The NAGPRA Review Committee is an advisory body appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, which reviews the implementation of the inventory and identification process and repatriation activities.

Dr. Edgar is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico and is active in research and administration. Ms. Farm is a Native Hawaiian attorney who has served as

Interim President of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. Ms. Farm, previously nominated by NSC Alliance, has served as a member and chair of the NAGPRA Review Committee.

Collections and Bioeconomy Are Priorities, Says White House OSTP

In an August 30, 2019 memorandum from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), federal agencies have been directed to prioritize national security, industrial leadership, energy and environmental leadership, health and bioeconomic innovation, and space exploration and commercialization in their fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget request for research and development (R&D).

The Administration's [memo](#) on R&D budget priorities for FY 2021 provides guidance on a national strategy "to advance bold, transformational leaps in [science and technology], build a diverse workforce of the future, solve previously intractable grand challenges, and ensure America remains the global S&T leader for generations to come."

The Administration stresses prioritizing the bioeconomy, defined as "the infrastructure, innovation, products, technology, and data derived from biologically-related processes and science that drive economic growth, promote health, and increase public benefit." To enable bioeconomic opportunities, agencies have been directed to focus on areas such as biotechnology, scientific collections, biosecurity, omics, and data analytics, and prioritize "evidence-based standards and research to rapidly establish microorganism, plant, and animal safety and efficacy for products developed using gene editing." In regards to public health, the memo directs agencies to prioritize research on the opioid crisis, infectious diseases, anti-microbial resistance, gene therapy, neuroscience, and HIV/ AIDS, among others.

The Administration's energy and environmental priorities include early-stage research on nuclear, renewable, and fossil energy; efforts to map, explore, and characterize the natural resources of the exclusive economic zone; research to understand and respond to changes in the ocean system; and efforts to quantify "predictability" of Earth systems across time and space. "Knowing the extent to which components of the Earth system are practicably predictable - from individual thunderstorms to long-term global change- is vitally important for physical understanding of the Earth system, assessing the value of prediction results, guiding Federal investments, developing effective policy, and improving predictive skill," the memo explains.

The memo also details five cross-cutting actions that spread across the R&D budgetary priorities and require departments and agencies to collaborate with each other and with the other stakeholders. These include building a diverse and highly skilled STEM workforce; creating and supporting research environments that reflect the "American values of free inquiry, competition, openness, and fairness"; supporting transformative high risk-high reward research; leveraging the "power of data" by improving data accessibility and security and building a data-skilled workforce; and expanding partnerships between agencies, academic institutions, businesses, nonprofit institutions, and other S&T sectors to build the nation's innovation capacity.

Senate Begins Work on FY 2020 Appropriations

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved their first spending bills for fiscal year (FY) 2020 – the Defense and Energy and Water Development appropriations bills – on September 12, 2019. Before leaving for the August recess, lawmakers had secured a bipartisan budget agreement to suspend budget sequestration and raise overall federal spending caps by \$320 billion over FY 2020 and 2021.

The Senate’s Energy-Water bill for FY 2020 would fund the Department of Energy (DOE) at \$39 billion, \$3.3 billion above FY 2019 and \$7.5 billion above the President’s budget request. The Department’s Office of Science would receive \$7.2 billion, \$630 million above FY 2019 enacted levels and \$345 million above the House level. Biological and Environmental research within DOE Science would get \$770 million under the Senate bill, \$40 million above the House bill and \$65 million above FY 2019. Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has been pushing for a “New Manhattan Project for Clean Energy” and said that “setting a new record funding level for the Office of Science — the fifth straight record year” was one of his top priorities.

It is unlikely that all 12 appropriations bills will be passed by both chambers before the end of the fiscal year on September 30. House Appropriations Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) said that the House had mostly “finished its work” by passing 10 of the 12 spending bills, and would be negotiating final versions with the Senate. Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) has said that Congress could pass two or three spending bills before the new fiscal year begins, including the Defense, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and the Energy and Water spending bills. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) announced that the House will take up a stopgap spending measure that will run through November 21, 2019 to fund agencies that do not have new funding in place in the new fiscal year.

OSTP Director Outlines Plan to Address Research Security

Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the President’s top science advisor, Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, has outlined the Administration’s plan to address foreign threats to the U.S. research enterprise in an open letter to the research community.

The National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), chaired by Dr. Droegemeier, is currently working to establish policies to strengthen national research security, which would have implications for all scientific fields.

Droegemeier stated in the [letter](#) that NSTC officially established the Joint Committee on the Research Environment (JCOPE) in May 2019 to address four major areas, namely research security, research rigor and integrity, safe and inclusive research environments, and coordinating administrative requirements for research – with each topic handled by a separate subcommittee. The research security subcommittee will work to establish government-wide guidelines for appropriate information disclosure that researchers need to follow in order to receive federal

research grants. It plans to coordinate outreach and engagement with Federal agencies, academic research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector and assemble “an array of examples in which our research enterprise was exploited or compromised.” In addition, the panel will also develop “best practices” for research institutions and methods for “identification, assessment, and management of risk.”

OSTP plans to hold discussions on research security at academic institutions across the country in the coming months. Dr. Droegemeier has urged the research community to engage in these discussions. “Working together, we will ensure that our research environment are safe and inclusive; operate with maximum integrity; protect our research assets in a manner balanced with the openness and international collaboration that have been so critical to our success; and do not encumber researchers, agencies, or institutions with unnecessary administrative work.”

NSB Calls for Growing the Skilled Technical Workforce

The National Science Board (NSB) — the governing body for the National Science Foundation (NSF) — has released a new report, “The Skilled Technical Workforce: Crafting America’s Science and Engineering Enterprise,” that highlights contributions of the skilled technical workforce (STW) and calls for action to grow this segment of the U.S. science and engineering (S&E) workforce.

The NSB [report](#) draws attention to the workforce of 17 million people who use S&E skills in their job but do not have a bachelor’s degree. “These individuals bring critical thinking, design, digital, math, and coding skills to work as auto mechanics, health care technicians, electricians, welders, computer systems analysts and administrators, and operators of ‘smart’ infrastructure,” reads the report. “They also contribute to the nation’s S&E enterprise, accounting for more than 50 percent of all workers in many of America’s advanced industries.”

Importantly, as natural science collection facilities increasingly rely on digitization and other tools to manage collections, mobilize specimen-related data, consider the use of new artificial intelligence tools, and support novel research and education programs, they will increasingly need new scientifically and technically skilled workers – not all of whom will require advanced degrees. Moreover, as collections have increasingly lead innovations in the use of technology and also have community engagement strategies and partnerships with schools and civic organizations, collection facilities can become one of the integral players in helping to cultivate a more science and tech capable workforce, according to some policy experts.

The report offers four recommendations for policymakers and S&E leaders: “Change the Message,” which involves countering negative perceptions and raising awareness of skilled technical workforce jobs; “Focus on the Data,” which involves collecting and sharing data on the education, skills, and workforce characteristics of the STW; “Leverage Federal Investments,” which involves leveraging the federal programs and investments that support STW-related programs; and “Build Partnerships,” which involves education institutions, industry, and government working as partners to grow the STEM-capable U.S. workforce.

The report was prepared by the NSB's Task Force on the Skilled Technical Workforce. The Board held five listening sessions around the country to gather feedback from over 200 individuals from 65 locations, including faculty and students at community colleges and technical schools, regional and local industry leaders, and local policymakers. According to Victor McCrary, who chairs the task force, the STW has been long underappreciated, but it "has and will continue to be essential to America's economic prosperity, our scientific and technological competitiveness, and our national security." He indicated that according to some projections, "by 2022, we will need 3.4 million more skilled technical workers in this country."

New ESA Rules Effective September 26

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published revised Endangered Species Act (ESA) [regulations](#) in the Federal Register on August 27, 2019. The revisions make it easier for regulators to delist species from the endangered species list and remove automatic protections for threatened species. The rules only apply to future listing decisions and go into effect on September 26, 2019. More information available at: https://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/regulation-revisions.html

OSTP Seeks Public Input on U.S. Bioeconomy

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) is requesting public input on the U.S. Bioeconomy, defined as the infrastructure, innovation, products, technology, and data derived from biologically-related processes and science that drive economic growth, promote health, and increase public benefit.

According to the notice, public input will inform "notable gaps, vulnerabilities, and areas to promote and protect in the U.S. Bioeconomy that may benefit from Federal government attention."

Comments will be accepted until October 22, 2019. More information about the Request for Information is available here: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-09-10/html/2019-19470.htm>

Nominations Sought for NSB Awards

The National Science Board (NSB) is accepting nominations for its 2020 honorary public service awards. The Vannevar Bush 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. The Public Service Award honors individuals and groups for substantial contributions to increasing public understanding of science and engineering. Nominations are due by Friday, September 27, 2019. Learn more about the awards and submit a nomination at <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/awards/>.

NAGPRA Review Committee to Meet in October

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee have scheduled a public teleconference on October 30, 2019. The agenda will include discussion of the Review Committee's annual report to Congress, requests for disposition of Native American human remains, and public comment.

Register here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdaZg6_R7_F3WNA2x7W1rd2uU3qLK9EnJfAXWeXB-fnVvNByw/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&fbzx=-800241247966857323

National Fossil Day is October 16

National Fossil Day, an annual celebration organized by the National Park Service (NPS), will take place on October 16, 2019. National Fossil Day is a nationwide celebration that will include paleontology activities planned by partner organizations across the United States. NSC Alliance has once again partnered with the National Park Service to promote the event.

NPS and National Fossil Day partners are sponsoring an art contest as a part of the celebration. The contest theme is “Extinct Giants and Survivors of the Last Ice Age.” For details about participating, go to: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fossilday/art-contest-2019.htm>

The participation of local museums, universities, and other scientific organizations is central to National Fossil Day. Help your local community learn about local paleontological and natural resources by participating in the event. To join NPS as a partner, visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fossilday/index.htm>.

Last Chance to Register: AIBS Communications Boot Camp for Scientists

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) will offer its Communications Training Boot Camp for Scientists this October 7-8, 2019. Students, faculty, and staff affiliated with NSC Alliance member institutions are eligible to receive a significant discount on the regular program registration rate.

The AIBS Communications Training Boot Camp for Scientists was designed to enhance the communication skills of scientists, particularly those interested in communicating with decision-makers and the news media. The program is an excellent way to develop new communication skills and identify effective methods for broadening the impact of research and education programs.

The Boot Camp is an intensive, two-day, hands-on training program.

Participants will learn:

- How to translate scientific findings for non-technical audiences
- How to tell a resonant story that informs decision-makers
- How to prepare for and participate in a news interview
- How to prepare for and engage in a meeting with a decision-maker
- How to protect your scientific reputation
- How to identify and define the audience you need to reach
- What decision-makers want to hear from a scientist
- What reporters are looking for in an interview
- How to leverage social media
- How the nation's science policy is developed and implemented

Participants will also have the opportunity for formal and informal discussions with science policy and communications experts working in Washington, DC.

Learn more about the program and register now at https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/communications_boot_camp.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.