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In this Issue:

- Stopgap Funding Averts Shutdown, While Senate Considers Increased Funding for Science
- USGS Issues New Policy on Collections Management
- NSF Announces “Jumpstarts” on Reintegrating Biology
- Federal AI Research Program Launched
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program Seeking Reviewers
- House Appropriations Chairwoman to Retire
- Lawmakers Introduce Contrasting Endangered Species Legislation

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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.

Stopgap Funding Averts Shutdown, While Senate Considers Increased Funding for Science

Congress has passed and the President has signed a stopgap funding bill to avert a government shutdown by funding the government at fiscal year (FY) 2019 levels through November 21, 2019. The funding measure, in the form of a continuing resolution, will give lawmakers more time to complete all the appropriations bills for FY 2020, which starts on October 1, 2019. The Senate has yet to vote on any of its appropriations bills for FY 2020, while the House has passed 10 out of its 12 spending bills.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved the fiscal year FY 2020 appropriations bills for Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS); Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies; and Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. The CJS bill funds the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), while the Interior-Environment bill funds the Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The U.S. House of Representatives passed its CJS, Agriculture, and Interior-Environment appropriations spending plan earlier in July.

If signed into law, the Senate CJS bill would fund NSF at \$8.317 billion — or \$242 million above the FY 2019 enacted level and \$319 million below the House level. NSF's Research and Related Activities account, which includes the Directorates for Biological Sciences, Geosciences, and Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences, would receive \$6.8 billion, an increase of \$249 million above FY 2019 and \$1.1 billion more than the President's request. NOAA would receive \$5.3 billion in FY 2020, an increase of \$88 million above FY 2019 and \$142 million less than the House bill. The President had proposed slashing the budget for NOAA by 18 percent in 2020. The Senate bill would provide \$22.75 billion for NASA, \$1.25 billion above the FY 2019 enacted level and \$44 million above the House bill, with most of the increase going towards space exploration programs. The measure would provide flat funding (\$6.9 billion) for NASA's Science programs and \$1.9 billion for Earth science. NIST would receive \$1.04 billion in FY 2020, \$53 million above FY 2019.

The Senate Interior-Environment appropriations legislation would provide \$13.7 billion overall for the Department of the Interior. The U.S. Geological Survey would be funded at \$1.2 billion in FY 2020, an increase of \$49 million above the FY 2019 enacted level and \$27 million less than the House bill. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would receive \$1.399 billion (+\$53 million); the National Park Services would grow by \$133 million to \$3.36 billion; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be funded at \$1.63 billion (+\$52.7 million). The bill does not include funding for the proposed Department of the Interior reorganization, including the [relocation](#) of BLM's headquarters to Colorado and more than 400 BLM jobs out West.

The Smithsonian Institution would receive \$1.05 billion, \$4.6 million above FY 2019 and \$23 million below the House bill. The National Museum of Natural History is slated for a flat budget under the Senate bill, while the House bill would provide a small boost of \$1.3 million.

Under the Senate's Agriculture appropriations bill, agricultural research would receive \$3.172 billion overall, with \$1.73 billion (+\$45 million) for the Agriculture Research Service, \$1.48 billion (+\$13 million) for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and \$425 million (+\$10 million) for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. The panel also approved \$25 million to help the U.S. Department of Agriculture relocate its two research agencies, NIFA and Economic Research Service, from Washington, DC, to the Kansas City area. This provision is in conflict with the House version of the bill, which has voted to [block](#) the move.

The Senate Appropriations panel has also advanced the Defense; Energy and Water Development; Legislative Branch; Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies; Homeland Security; State and Foreign Operations; and Financial Services and General Government appropriations bills.

The Senate's Labor-Health and Human Services appropriations bill has been approved by its subcommittee but must still be adopted by the full Appropriations Committee. The bill would provide the National Institutes of Health with a \$3 billion increase, bringing the research agency to \$42.1 billion in FY 2020. The bill would provide \$492 million for the 21st Century Cures Act, which supports the Cancer Moonshot and the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative

Neurotechnologies brain-mapping initiative. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, slated for closure under the President's budget, would be funded at \$244 million (+\$2 million).

USGS Issues New Policy on Collections Management

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recently issued a new policy establishing requirements for the documentation and management of its scientific working collections to address its rapidly expanding collection of natural history specimens.

According to the [policy](#), USGS scientists may “assemble and maintain physical samples or specimens in the conduct of scientific research, and these working collections, while not intended for long-term preservation, are federally funded assets with a potential value to science and society.” USGS scientists would be required to plan for the acquisition and management of working collections through a “Collection Plan” that describes the planned disposition of all new working collections. Any existing collection that lacks such a plan will be evaluated “to determine their potential for disposal, transfer, retention as ongoing working collections or museum property” based on criteria and requirements set forth in USGS [guidelines](#). When a working collection is no longer needed for ongoing research, USGS will evaluate the collection's value to the agency's mission and the broader scientific and educational community, to determine if the collection needs to be “transferred or destroyed.”

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), a nonprofit organization that works with government scientists, land managers, environmental law enforcement agents, field specialists and other resource professionals on issues related to management of public resources, expressed [concerns](#) about the new USGS policy. “Preserving and documenting the original specimens that support scientific conclusions, especially those that are published, is critical for doing good science,” said Pacific PEER Director Jeff Ruch. PEER criticized the directive's classification of its natural history collections as “working collections” that are not intended for long-term preservation despite their value to the scientific community. According to PEER, the policy also “lacks procedures to track or inventory the disposition of scientific and working collections” and “ignores conflicts with other federal policies and does not acknowledge the property interests of individuals, tribes, or other public agencies.”

NSF Announces “Jumpstarts” on Reintegrating Biology

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is organizing a series of NSF-funded virtual and in-person forums focused on identifying the opportunities and challenges for reintegrating research across the biology subdisciplines. Details about the effort can be found at <https://reintegratingbiology.org/>. The feedback from recent [town halls](#) on the topic will inform the next phase – four two-and-a-half day “jumpstarts” or workshops, to bring together researchers from across scientific, technical, and design disciplines to develop new and innovative ideas for future exploration.

Applications to attend these jumpstarts are open to the public. Learn more and apply at <https://reintegratingbiology.org/jumpstarts/>

Federal AI Research Program Launched

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced a new program to advance research in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and accelerate the development of transformational, AI-powered innovation. The new funding opportunity anticipates \$200 million in large-scale, long-term investments in AI research and education over the next 6 years.

The effort is led by NSF in partnership with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Science & Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The program's planning track will support grants of \$500,000 for up to two years to enable teams to develop collaborative plans for full institute operations. Additionally, the program has an institute track to support cooperative agreements of \$16 million to \$20 million for four to five years for establishing AI research institutes.

The National Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes program anticipates \$120 million in grants next year to fund planning grants and up to six research institutes within NSF to “create national nexus points for universities, federal agencies, industries and nonprofits.”

Among the six high-priority areas listed for the program are “AI-Driven Innovation in Agriculture and the Food System” and “AI for Accelerating Molecular Synthesis and Manufacturing.” A 2018 *BioScience* [article](#) explored the challenges of applying AI and deep learning technology to the life sciences, and highlighted the applications for agriculture and species conservation.

Learn more about the program and its requests for proposals at https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505686

NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program Seeking Reviewers

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is seeking reviewers for its Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), which supports outstanding graduate students in NSF-supported science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines who are pursuing research-based graduate degrees at accredited United States institutions.

Interested potential reviewers must create a registration and outline their research interests in order to be assigned applications in their expertise area. Reviewers will also participate in virtual panels to discuss the applications they reviewed. Register at: https://nsfgrfp.org/panelist_info/registration

House Appropriations Chairwoman to Retire

House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) has announced that she will retire at the end of the current Congress.

The Chairwoman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), is next in line to lead the full panel and said, “I am interested in placing my name for consideration as the committee member with the most experience and seniority when the time is appropriate.” Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) has also expressed an interest in running for the sought-after House Appropriations Committee chair in 2021. However, if Democrats lose control of the House in 2021, then Kaptur and DeLauro could compete to be the ranking member on the panel.

Lawmakers Introduce Contrasting Endangered Species Legislation

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) has introduced [legislation](#) to repeal the Trump administration's recent [changes](#) to Endangered Species Act (ESA) rules. Concurrently, the Congressional Western Caucus, which consists of Republican lawmakers from Western states and led by Chairman Paul Gosar (R-AZ), has unveiled a draft legislative package that would overhaul the Endangered Species Act of 1973. According to *E&E News*, the package would modify the delisting designation process, tighten the petition process to reduce the current backlog, cap attorneys' fees at \$125 per hour for ESA lawsuits, and increase the role of state and local governments in the petition and listing processes. It would also call for making the scientific data used in listing and delisting decisions available to the public. The caucus will be introducing the bills, which are still being finalized, in a few months.

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.