

## **AIBS news**

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# AIBS *news*

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## **AIBS Public Policy Office Conducts Workshop at 2010 SETAC Meetings**

Last November, AIBS Public Policy Director Robert Gropp traveled to Portland, Oregon, where he conducted a half-day workshop called “Communicating Science to Policymakers and the Media.” The program, sponsored by the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry North America (SETAC), was one of a several short courses available to SETAC members attending the organization’s annual meeting.

“It was a great meeting,” Gropp said. “The short course participants were very engaged in the course and left the meeting more confident, I think, in their ability to successfully interact with decisionmakers.” Gropp also was a guest at the SETAC public relations committee meeting. “Several possibilities for increased AIBS-SETAC collaboration on communicating cutting-edge scientific information to decisionmakers and the media were identified,” he said.

The AIBS Public Policy Office offers a range of training workshops designed to help scientists and educators become more comfortable and effective at communicating their work to policymakers and the news media. For more information about these programs, please visit [www.aibs.org/public-policy/policy\\_training.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/policy_training.html).

## **AIBS Cosponsors Evolution Symposium**

AIBS and the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center (NESCent) cosponsored the seventh annual evolution symposium and teaching workshop at the 2010 National Association of Biology Teachers Professional Development Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The symposium featured four speakers whose research in molecular evolution is revolutionizing our understanding of familiar and compelling examples of evolution: Edmund “Butch” Brodie III (Mountain Lake Biological Station, University of Virginia), Allen Rodrigo (NESCent, Duke University), Hopi Hoekstra (Harvard University), and Sean Carroll (Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the University of Wisconsin, Madison). All speakers’ presentations were recorded and are now available for free viewing at [www.nescent.org/media/NABTSymposium2010.php](http://www.nescent.org/media/NABTSymposium2010.php). The following day, a workshop was held for educators interested in learning new ways to integrate molecular evolution into their courses. The collection of teaching resources, compiled for the workshop, is available on the NESCent Web site ([www.nescent.org/media/NABT2010](http://www.nescent.org/media/NABT2010)).

## **Graduate Students: Apply for the ASM/AIBS 2011 Public Policy Internship**

The American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) and AIBS are pleased to announce the availability of a paid internship in the Washington, DC, AIBS Public Policy Office. The internship is open to ASM members who are currently enrolled in a graduate program and who are engaged in research that will contribute to our understanding and conservation of mammals. The internship is for three months during fall 2011 and carries a generous monthly stipend of \$2000. Selection criteria include a demonstrated interest in the public policy process, strong communication skills, and excellent academic record.

The ASM-AIBS Public Policy Internship is an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in public policy at the national level. By working with the AIBS Public Policy Office, the intern will learn how scientific societies, non-

governmental organizations, executive branch agencies (e.g., the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the US Geological Survey), and the legislative branch interact to craft science policy. Duties may include, but are not limited to:

- attending science coalition meetings, congressional and agency briefings, hearings, press briefings, and other relevant events
- assisting with tracking and analysis of relevant issues
- assisting with planning Capitol Hill briefings or press events
- preparing a written report on the internship experience
- serving as the ASM representative to the AIBS Council

Applications are now being accepted; the deadline to apply is 1 May 2011. For more information, please visit [www.aibs.org/public-policy/student\\_opportunities.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html).

## **Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Increases Its Science Policy Efforts**

The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) is the latest scientific organization to join with AIBS to advance the nation’s science policy. On 19 November, CERF became the newest participant-level contributor to the AIBS Public Policy Office. Among other benefits of contributing to the AIBS Public Policy Office, CERF will receive assistance planning a congressional science briefing for the incoming 112th Congress.

CERF joins a growing group of leading scientific societies and

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organizations working in collaboration with AIBS to provide policymakers with timely scientific information. For information about how your organization can benefit from AIBS policy programs and services, please visit [www.aibs.org/public-policy](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy).

### Recent Articles Online at [www.actionbioscience.org](http://www.actionbioscience.org)

#### Original articles in English

- **Balancing Benefits and Risks of Synthetic Biology**  
The field of synthetic biology challenges the way we see our world. Now that the first living “synthetic cell” has been created, Heather Lowrie, of the University of Edinburgh, suggests that the scientific community address ethical and safety concerns. Read this article at [www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/lowrie.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/lowrie.html).
- **Designing a Landscape for Sustainability**  
Molly Phemister, landscape architecture educator, explains that sustainability in landscape design has everything to do with complexity—with the interrelationship of the parts to the whole over time. Designers are catalysts of a landscape’s ecological path, not sculptors or painters of a stagnant medium. Read this article at [www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/phemister.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/phemister.html).

#### Spanish translation of a previously posted article

- **“Polución Lumínica y Ecosistemas”** [Light Pollution and Ecosystems], by Travis Longcore and Catherine Rich, of the University of Southern California. In this article, the authors describe how artificial
  - with significant and adverse impacts to ecosystems. Read the article in Spanish at [www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/longcore\\_rich.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/longcore_rich.html) and in English at [www.actionbioscience.org/environment/longcore\\_rich.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/environment/longcore_rich.html).

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### Recent Public Policy Reports Online at [www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports)

#### Public Policy Report for 22 November

- **AIBS, Member Societies Ask Congress to Pass FY 2011 Science Appropriations.** On 17 November, AIBS and nine of its member organizations sent letters to the chairmen and ranking Republican members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations requesting that Congress pass a fiscal year 2011 appropriations bill that would provide the National Science Foundation with \$7.424 billion.
- **Attention Graduate Students: Apply for the 2011 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award.** The AIBS Public Policy Office is pleased to announce that applications are being accepted for the 2011 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA). This award recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences and science education who have demonstrated initiative and leadership in science policy. EPPLA recipients receive firsthand experience at the interface of science and public policy. The 2011 winners will receive an expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to participate in meetings with their congressional delegation, training, information on the federal budget and appropriations process, a certificate and one-year AIBS membership, a complimentary one-year subscription to *BioScience*, and a copy of *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*.
- **AIBS Writes to Interior Officials Regarding Scientific Integrity.** On 19 November, AIBS wrote

to Ken Salazar, secretary of the interior, and Michael Bromwich, director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), regarding a new policy that requires all presentations authored by BOEMRE employees to be reviewed by public affairs personnel prior to public release. The policy applies to both technical and nontechnical presentations.

- **Governors and Science Experts Partner to Build STEM Agendas in States.** The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices has formed a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Advisory Committee to help states develop comprehensive STEM agendas. The advisory committee is composed of experts from education, policy, and business and will advance the association's STEM agenda on K–12 and higher education, and inform the development of a national STEM meeting hosted by the NGA Center for Best Practices in the fall of 2011. For more information about NGA's STEM education efforts, visit [www.nga.org/center/edu](http://www.nga.org/center/edu).
- **Some Progress for Science Education in Louisiana.** According to recent reports from the National Center for Science Education and the Associated Press, advocates for science education have won a recent skirmish in the battle for evolution education in Louisiana. Recently, the Textbook/Media/

Library Advisory Council for the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 8-4 to recommend textbooks that include evolution.

#### **AIBS Public Policy Report for 8 November 2010**

- **2010 Elections: Congress Fills with New Politicians.** The results from the 2 November midterm elections mean big changes for Congress next year. Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives, and the 112th Congress will have more than 100 new members. The vast majority of the incoming lawmakers lack extensive political experience. The *Washington Post* has described the new House as “an everyman’s roost.”
- **Federal Government Reverses Position on Gene Patents.** The federal government has taken a new position on the patentability of human genes: Genes are products of nature that should not be eligible for a patent. This new position was announced in a friend-of-the-court brief filed by the Department of Justice on 29 October. The legal arguments laid out in the brief do support the ability to patent “man-made transformation or manipulation of the raw materials of the genome.” However, for a DNA-based product to qualify for a patent, the patent seeker must do “something more than identifying and isolating what has always

existed in nature, no matter how difficult or useful that discovery may be.”

- **Nations Set New Biodiversity Conservation Goals, Agree to Benefits Sharing.** The Convention on Biological Diversity has new targets for preserving and protecting global biodiversity. The agreement reached by the 193 parties to the convention aims to halve the rate of loss of natural habitats, protect 17 percent of terrestrial and 10 percent of marine ecosystems, and restore 15 percent of degraded environments globally. The new strategic plan aims to meet these goals by 2020. Nations have two years to create an implementation strategy. Parties also agreed to substantially increase financial support to achieve these goals, including a pledge from Japan for \$2 billion in financing.
- **GAO Report Calls for Improved Planning at EPA Libraries.** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should complete its strategic plan for the agency's library network, according to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). In its report, the GAO found that although the EPA has been working to restore its library services, the agency failed to complete an overarching strategy for the library network. The agency's draft strategic plan currently lacks goals, criteria for making funding decisions, or a timeline for inventorying and digitizing holdings.