

AIBSnews

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AIBSnews

DECEMBER 2006/VOLUME 56 NUMBER 12

New AIBS Board of Directors Members for 2007

AIBS welcomes the new members of its Board of Directors for 2007. Four of the 13 seats on the board were up for election this year. The president-elect serves a one-year term and automatically succeeds to a one-year term as president, then a one-year term as immediate past-president. All other seats on the board have three-year terms.

Officers elected

President-elect for 2007

Rita R. Colwell (University of Maryland; Johns Hopkins University)

Treasurer

Richard B. Norgaard (University of California at Berkeley)

Board member at large

Steward T. A. Pickett (Institute of Ecosystem Studies)

Board member elected by the AIBS Council

Alan Savitsky (Old Dominion University; American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists and Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles)

Rotating off the board at the end of 2006 are Marvalee Wake, J. Michael Scott, and Arturo Gómez-Pompa. AIBS is grateful for their service.

AIBS/BCSS/NESCent Cosponsor Evolution Symposium

On 14 October 2006, AIBS continued its tradition of hosting a symposium on evolution at the annual conference of the National Association of Biology Teachers in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The symposium, titled "Macroevolution: Evolution above the Species Level," drew

over 200 high school and college faculty members.

Presentations in the symposium provided current information about macroevolutionary processes, the distinctions between and the interactions of micro- and macroevolution, the development and evolution of "key innovations" and major lineages of organisms, and the evidence for these processes.

The National Evolutionary Synthesis Center (NESCent), one of the symposium cosponsors, developed a CD-ROM of resource materials for teaching, which is available online at no cost (<http://eog.nescent.org/NABTsymposium.htm>). NESCent staff distributed 500 copies of the CD-ROM during the meeting.

The Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, another cosponsor, ran education-specific sessions during the day. Power-Point presentations will be posted soon, along with audio files of the speakers' talks, on the AIBS Web site: www.aibs.org/special-symposia/2006_macroevolution.html.

Information about past and future evolution symposia is available at www.aibs.org/special-symposia/.

AIBS and BSCS Cosponsor the NABT Evolution Education Award

On 13 October 2006, Susan Musante, director of the AIBS Education and Outreach Program, and Janet Powell, associate director and chief science education officer at the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, presented the 2006 NABT (National Association of Biology Teachers) Evolution Education Award to Donald Cronkite. The ceremony took place during the 2006 NABT annual conference.

Cronkite teaches core courses on evolutionary biology, embryology, and the history of biology; he also teaches annual seminars on "special topics in evolu-

tionary biology," each of which focuses on a specific aspect of evolution. His work in promoting the understanding of evolutionary biology extends beyond the college classroom. He has organized conferences and workshops for high school biology teachers, and has taken an active role in promoting an understanding of science and science education in his community.

In his letter nominating Cronkite, Hope College Provost James N. Boelkins said, "He is a scholar who writes and presents material relevant to his life-long interest in biology and the topic of evolution. He is a gentleman who can engage in difficult discussions on the topic of creation and evolution with sensitivity to other viewpoints and with integrity to scientific knowledge."

AIBS Comments on Ocean Research Plan

On 20 October 2006, AIBS submitted comments on "Charting the Course for

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Ocean Science in the United States: Research Priorities for the Next Decade,” a draft document issued by the National Science and Technology Council Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology.

An excerpt of the AIBS comments follows:

The draft report focuses needed attention on a number of important research topics. For example, a concerted national research effort addressing the stewardship of our natural and cultural ocean resources, better understanding system resilience to natural events, improving ecosystem health, and better understanding the link between ocean, lake and coastal systems and human health are all timely research arenas that warrant a robust and sustained federal investment. However, a number of significant issues do not, at the surface, appear to have been addressed in the report. Thus, these comments are intended to raise these issues for the future consideration of the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST).

A significant concern with the draft report is that it fails to articulate the funding that will be sought to achieve the proposed goals. A number of the research activities proposed are already initiatives at various federal agencies, yet progress has been slow due to what some consider inadequate and unpredictable funding. A realistic budget request and multiyear commitment to federal research program managers would seem to be a central element necessary for the ultimate success of the JSOST research plan.

Another concern with the draft report is the lack of attention given to international collaboration. Effective and high-impact research on deep-ocean systems, the Great Lakes, or coastal ecosystems requires effective and strategic international collaboration. The final report would be

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greatly improved if it included a framework for supporting international research partnerships and collaborative agreements.

Additionally, significant research questions about ocean, Great Lakes, and coastal ecosystem biodiversity remain unanswered. It is important that the final report fully reflect these research questions and needs. Scientists must be able to access and utilize state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment. In addition to new tools, such as the ocean observing system, the report should ensure that existing components of our research infrastructure are appropriately addressed. Research vessels, marine laboratories and field stations, natural science collections, and the human capital that utilize these facilities are all necessary to address the research agenda proposed in the draft report. In many cases, however, these science facilities require new investments to maintain their physical structures and construct the infrastructure, such as cyber infrastructure, that will make it possible to serve scientific research into the future. In each of the past two years, the research and development priorities memorandum from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) has articulated the need to prioritize federal object-based scientific collections.

AIBS at the 2006 SACNAS Conference

AIBS, together with the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center, organized a session entitled “Exploring Careers in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology” at the annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in the Sciences, held 26–29 October 2006 in Tampa, Florida. The following four biologists served as panelists:

- Bruce Rinker, director of the Environmental Lands Division, Pinellas County, Florida



Panelist Bryan Rybarczyk and NESCent education manager Jory Weintraub at the SACNAS session. Photograph: Sharon Potter.

- Margaret Lowman, professor and director of environmental Initiatives, New College of Florida
- Emilio Bruna, assistant professor, Department of Wildlife, Ecology, and Conservation, University of Florida
- Bryan Rybarczyk, coordinator of undergraduate research initiatives, Department of Biology, University of North Carolina

More than 40 people, mostly undergraduate and graduate students, attended the session. AIBS also hosted an exhibit booth at the conference, which attracted over 2000 students, faculty, and other science professionals, to provide information on AIBS's education and diversity initiatives.

NEON Delivers Key Documents to NSF

October–November 2006 was an exceptionally busy time for staff at the NEON Project Office. The effort focused on preparing five major project documents for delivery to the National Science Foundation (NSF) in advance of the conceptual design review of NEON by an NSF panel the week of 6 November.

The documents were (1) the Integrated Science and Education Plan (ISEP), which sets forth the NEON vision; (2) the Networking and Informatics Baseline Design, which describes the cyberinfrastructure that will support and enable NEON; (3) the Preliminary Project Execution Plan, a document that links the NEON conceptual design with methods for deploying integrated instruments,

experiments, facilities, and cyberinfrastructure; (4) the Project Development Plan, the roadmap that defines the scope of work and the strategy that will take NEON to the construction phase; and (5) the Cost Book.

The NEON Project Office received expert input on the ISEP from a NEON writing subcommittee, and a great deal of useful comment on the document from the ecological community. The revised draft (available at www.neoninc.org) is much improved as a result.

In addition, in October NEON staff posted a sixth document, the Request for Information (RFI). The goal of the RFI is to obtain information from the environmental science community to further refine the design and specifications of NEON. Respondents to the RFI have an opportunity to identify national- and multiregional-scale scientific questions that require NEON observational and cyberinfrastructure resources; questions that may also require continental-scale manipulative experiments; locations of core wildland sites and experiments; and a continental-scale research gradient.

Electronic responses to the RFI are due at the NEON Project Office by 5 January 2007. An NSF-selected scientific and technical committee will review the responses on their scientific merit, logistical issues, and other factors. NEON, Inc., will then consider the recommendations and use them to develop a final integrated, site-specific plan for deploying NEON infrastructure.

On 1 November, the NEON Project Office hosted an RFI question-and-answer session at the American Society of Association Executives conference center in Washington, DC. More than 50 individuals registered for the event, participating either in person or via a live Webcast. They received clarifications about the requirements from NEON board chair Jim MacMahon and Project Office administrative director Brian Wee. The session was recorded; check the NEON, Inc., Web site (www.neoninc.org) for details.



NEON staffer Dan Johnson (left) describes NEON science and infrastructure to Donald H. Priester at the 16th Annual Science and Engineering Alliance Student Technical Conference. Photograph: Cheryl Solomon.

NEON Exhibits at Student Technical Conference

NEON staffers attended the 16th Annual Science and Engineering Alliance (SEA) Student Technical Conference, 4–7 October 2006, in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Dan Johnson (NEON public information representative) and Cheryl Solomon (science associate) met students, representatives of federal agencies, and engineering and technical faculty from attending universities at the NEON exhibit. Elizabeth Blood, NSF program director for NEON, briefed SEA attendees at several sessions on 6 October.

The SEA was founded in 1990 as a nonprofit consortium. The SEA serves four state-supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Alabama A&M University, Jackson State University, Southern University and A&M College, and Prairie View A&M University) and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. It focuses on ensuring a supply of globally competitive minority scientists to meet the development and research needs of the public and private sectors.

NEON Welcomes New Board Members

NEON, Inc., is pleased to announce that Jerry M. Melillo and John Aber have been elected to the Board of Directors.

Melillo is a senior scientist and co-director of The Ecosystems Center, Marine Biological Laboratory, at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. His research interests include a focus on the broadscale influences of global change on terrestrial

ecosystems, especially on how human activities affect the biogeochemistry of those ecosystems. His extensive research activities include soil-warming experiments in Sweden and at the Harvard Forest in western Massachusetts. Melillo has served as associate director for the environment at the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and as president of the Ecological Society of America.

Aber, a forest ecosystems specialist, is a professor in the Department of Natural Resources and the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). He is also chair of the UNH intercollege Natural Resources PhD program. Aber holds a bachelor's degree in engineering and applied science, and a master's and PhD in forestry and environmental studies, all from Yale University. Part of his forest research work helps to create computer models of ecosystem function that are linked to geographic information systems and useful in exploring the impacts of climate change.

Attention Graduate Students: 2007 EPPLA Applications Now Available

AIBS is pleased to announce that applications for the 2007 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leader Award (EPPLA) are now available. The EPPLA was established by AIBS in 2003 to recognize and further the science policy interests of graduate students in the biological sciences and science education.

Information about prior EPPLA recipients is available online at www.aibs.org.

[org/public-policy/policy_training.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/policy_training.html). Application information is available online at www.aibs.org/announcements/061106_graduate_student_policy_training.html. The application deadline is Friday, 16 February 2007.

AIBS among Sponsors of Walk to Fight Breast Cancer

AIBS was a corporate sponsor of the 13th annual Walk to Fight Breast Cancer, held in Alexandria, Virginia, on 21 October, under the auspices of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Safeway Food and Drug, and Mix 107.3. The three walkers who represented AIBS at the event were Jennifer Williams, *BioScience* publications assistant; Alex Marshall, NEON project assistant; and Abraham Parker, AIBS education and outreach program associate.

The walk raised \$164,000 in sponsorships, pledges, and donations.

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original articles in English

- "Fossils and the Origins of Whales," interview with Philip Gingerich, Museum of Paleontology and Departments of Geological Sciences, Biology, and Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- "The Nature of Evidence," interview with Jeff Levinton, Department of Ecology and Evolution, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Spanish translation of previously posted article

- "El Centro Internacional del Agua" [International Water Facility], by Mohamed Kassas, professor emeritus of botany, University of Cairo, Egypt, and winner of the United Nations Prize for Environment

Recent AIBS Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

Public Policy Report for 6 November 2006

- Applications for 2007 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leader Award now available
- Reminder: November 7 is election day
- NSB seeks new members
- Hays confirmed as associate director for science at OSTP
- Employment opportunity: AIBS Education and Outreach Manager
- Predator control debate still alive in Alaska and British Columbia
- New in *BioScience*: "National Academy of Sciences Issues Gender Equity Plan"
- From the *Federal Register*

Public Policy Report for 23 October 2006

- AIBS comments on NSTC ocean research plan
- NPS gets new director
- House Democrats investigate EPA library plan
- Border fence could be barrier to wildlife
- From the *Federal Register*