

AIBSNews

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AIBS*news*

JULY/AUGUST 2008/VOLUME 58 NUMBER 7

SWS Members Attend AIBS Policy, Media Workshops

As part of the recent annual meeting of the Society for Wetland Scientists (SWS) in Washington, DC, the AIBS Public Policy Office conducted two workshops for meeting participants. The SWS is an AIBS member society and participant-level contributor to the AIBS Public Policy Office.

Megan Kelhart, AIBS senior public policy associate, conducted a 90-minute workshop titled "Congress 101." The session provided participants with a nuts-and-bolts understanding of congressional structure and function relative to science policy, including environmental policy and funding for research. Additionally, participants engaged in hands-on activities designed to provide scientists with the basic tools necessary to successfully meet with a member of Congress.

Holly Menninger, AIBS senior public affairs associate, conducted a "Communicating Science to the Media" workshop. The program, which builds on the popular AIBS publication *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*, helped participants better understand how to prepare for interviews with news reporters.

The AIBS Public Policy Office staff welcomes the opportunity to provide similar workshops for other member societies or interested organizations. Please contact AIBS Director of Public Policy Robert Gropp (e-mail: rgropp@aibs.org) for more information. Copies of *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media* may be ordered from the AIBS online bookstore at www.aibs.org/bookstore/.

AIBS Opposes Antiscience Legislation in Louisiana

On 3 June 2008, AIBS lent its voice to the chorus of scientific and educational organizations opposing passage of Louisiana

Senate Bill (SB) 733, the so-called Louisiana Science Education Act. The measure, introduced by state Senator Ben Nevers, a Democrat, would negatively affect science education in Louisiana.

Nevers, an established proponent of teaching creationism/intelligent design, represents the part of the state that includes the Ouachita Parish School Board, which sought a congressional earmark from US Senator David Vitter (R-LA) in 2007. The earmark would have provided \$100,000 in federal funds to the district to "pay for a report suggesting 'improvements' in science education in Louisiana, the development and distribution of educational materials and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Ouachita Parish School Board's 2006 policy that opened the door to biblically inspired teachings in science classes" (Bill Walsh, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 23 September 2007). The attempt to secure the earmark was unsuccessful, in part because of strong opposition from AIBS and several AIBS member societies.

SB 733 is the most recent attempt to redefine science in the state of Louisiana, and this time, the antiscience campaign is advancing unchecked. Various state newspapers have warned the state legislature to avoid the folly of other localities, such as Dover, Pennsylvania, which incurred expensive legal fees and international ridicule as they sought—unsuccessfully—to defend antiscience education policies. Scientists from across Louisiana have also been working to defeat this measure, and national scientific organizations have warned state legislators of the negative impact the passage of the measure would have on the state. The AIBS letter sent to Louisiana House Speaker Jim Turner is posted at www.aibs.org/position-statements. Additionally, evolution education resources are available from AIBS at www.aibs.org/public-policy/teaching_evolution.html.

NEON in the Field: A Visit to the Mid-Atlantic Domain

From 22 to 24 April 2008, staff and consultants from the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) visited the candidate core site for the mid-Atlantic domain, located at the Smithsonian National Zoo's Conservation Research Center in Front Royal, Virginia. The objective was to evaluate scientific and logistical matters essential to deploying instruments and conducting NEON science activities at the site. The fieldwork included assessments of potential tower locations and multiple vegetation and sampling plots, the availability of power and communications to the site, and consideration of a low-order stream as part of the proposed STREON (stream experimental and observational network) experiment.

NEON Chief of Science Michael Keller led the site-visit team and made a detailed NEON presentation to an audience of Smithsonian officials and other colleagues in the domain, followed by an extended question-and-answer session. Representatives from the National Park Service, George Mason University, and the University of Maryland also made presentations, detailing historic and current scientific research conducted in the domain and offering ideas for new initiatives.

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Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

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Orientation day. William McShea, an ecologist with the Smithsonian Conservation and Research Center, introduces members of the NEON site visit team to the Conservation Research Center (CRC) facility—its history, infrastructure, landscape, and boundaries. The 3200-acre Smithsonian property is adjacent to the 196,000-acre Shenandoah National Park, where extensive watershed studies have been conducted. The CRC, which is closed to the general public, offers NEON an effective network of roads within its natural areas.



NEON Chief of Science Michael Keller surveys the Conservation Research Center. Keller is tasked with organizing visits to all 20 of the NEON candidate core sites by August 2008. He joined NEON in fall 2007, after more than a decade as the project scientist of the NASA LBA-ECO component of the “Large-Scale Biosphere-Atmosphere Experiment in Amazonia” (LBA).



A closer look at Posey Creek. Margaret Palmer, an aquatic ecologist and member of the NEON, Inc., Board of Directors, investigates a potential location at the Conservation Research Center for a STREON Experiment. The NEON aquatic experiment will consist of a suite of instruments deployed in selected small streams within 10 NEON domains. STREON will focus on aquatic nutrients, simplification of food webs, and extreme events such as drought and floods; it will sample water chemistry, cold stream metabolism, and a variety of organisms, including algae, microbes, and fish. Palmer is a professor at, and the director of, the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, part of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, as well as one of the leaders of the STREON experiment.

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Discussions of future collaborations focused on NEON mobile and relocatable instruments that may be strategically deployed to extend a “mountains to coast” observatory capacity from the candidate core site in Front Royal across the mid-Atlantic region. For more information about NEON, contact Dan Johnson, NEON public information representative, by e-mail (djohnson@neoninc.org).

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original Interviews

- “The Threat of Global Warming,” with James E. Hanson, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies
- “The Water We Drink: Warning!” with Robert Morris, physician, environmental epidemiologist, and author

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

Public Policy Report for 23 June 2008

- New report provides next president with recommendations for OSTP

- Louisiana politicians politicize science education
- War funding bill includes money for science
- Heinz Center releases new ecosystem report, calls for action on monitoring
- What do the candidates think about science?
- From the *Federal Register*
- Now in the AIBS bookstore: *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*

Public Policy Report for 9 June 2008

- Climate legislation dies in Senate
- SWS members participate in AIBS policy, media workshops
- AIBS comments on American Academy of Arts and Sciences White Paper
- AIBS opposes antiscience legislation in Louisiana
- Employment opportunity: AIBS Public Affairs Associate

- New in *BioScience*: “Shale Oil: Alternative Energy or Environmental Degradation?”
- From the *Federal Register*
- Now in the AIBS bookstore: *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*

Public Policy Report for 27 May 2008

- Supplemental science funding?
- Polar bears threatened, but Interior ducks emissions regulation
- Evolution update
- Congress overrides president’s veto of farm bill
- From the *Federal Register*
- Now in the AIBS bookstore: *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*

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