

AIBSnews

Source: BioScience, 56(6) : 544-545

Published By: American Institute of Biological Sciences

URL: [https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568\(2006\)56\[544:A\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2006)56[544:A]2.0.CO;2)

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AIBS*news*

JUNE 2006/VOLUME 56 NUMBER 6

NEON in Transition

Two current NEON staff members, Brian Wee and Bruce Leighty, have taken on additional management duties for the National Ecological Observatory Network.

Brian Wee has been named the NEON Project Management Office administrative director. In his new capacity, Wee oversees the program's staff, activities, and deliverables; interfaces with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the project's principal investigators; and sees that work is completed on time and on budget. He had previously served as a postdoctoral associate since the inception of the NEON Project Office, and as a staff scientist.

Wee received his BSc in information systems and computer science from the National University of Singapore in 1992. Andersen Consulting (now Accenture) sponsored his MS in computer science at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. He focused primarily on designing and implementing computer-augmented learning solutions for high school classrooms, and on corporate training. After graduation, Wee returned to work with Andersen Consulting, leading projects in instructional design, knowledge management, business process redesign, and Web development. In 1998, he began work on his PhD in ecology, evolution, and behavior at the University of Texas at Austin. In his dissertation, Wee investigated the relative effects of behavioral, physiological, and landscape barriers on the genetic structure of insect populations.

Bruce Leighty, who has worked as a consultant for NEON throughout the design process, now serves in an expanded capacity as operations manager for the project, overseeing the development and management of key operational systems (especially financial systems), contract administration, and compliance with gov-

ernmental rules and regulations for NEON, Inc.

Leighty holds dual master's degrees—an MBA from the Yale School of Management and an MFS from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies—and has extensive experience in natural resource management, business administration, and program management operations. His varied career includes positions with the National Wildlife Federation (Barrier Islands project coordinator) and the Harvard Forest (inventory forester); he also has extensive experience with US government projects, including projects of the US Agency for International Development and the NSF. Before joining the NEON effort, he served as the World Wildlife Fund's director of management and Eastern European programming for the Biodiversity Support Program.

J. Michael Scott Receives Distinguished Service Award

AIBS is pleased to congratulate board member (and *BioScience* editorial board member) J. Michael Scott for garnering a Distinguished Service Award from the Department of the Interior. Scott was one of 27 to receive the honor on 4 May from Acting Interior Secretary Lynn Scarlett.

According to the department, "The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honorary recognition an employee can receive within the Department of the Interior. It is granted for an outstanding contribution to science, outstanding skill or ability in the performance of duty, outstanding contribution made during an eminent career in the Department or any other exceptional contribution to public service."

Scott is a research scientist with the US Geological Survey and a professor at the University of Idaho's Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; he also leads

the Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

AIBS Sends Letter on Evolution to Canadian Grant-making Body

Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), a major government grant-making agency, recently rejected a grant proposal, in part because of the council's apparent doubts about the theory of evolution. Dr. Brian Alters, director of the Evolution Education Research Centre at Montreal's McGill University, revealed at a public lecture in late March 2006 that one of the SSHRC review panel's justifications for rejecting the grant application was—to quote a letter from the panel—that there was inadequate "justification for the assumption in the proposal that the theory of evolution, and not intelligent-design theory, was correct."

Ironically, the grant would have supported an effort to study how the intelligent design movement has affected science education and Canadians' understanding of evolution.

On 12 April, AIBS president Kent Holsinger sent a letter to the SSHRC explaining how evolution is the only scientific theory that explains the history and diversity of life on Earth, and that intelligent design is not a scientific alter-

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native to evolution. The text of the letter is available at www.aibs.org/position-statements/20060412_aibs_letter_to_3.html.

In response to the AIBS letter, SSHRC officials indicated that the panel's review was poorly written and thus errantly conveyed the perception that the panel questions evolution. Meanwhile, Alters and others have expressed a concern that the SSHRC has yet to retract the statement.

AIBS, Ecological Society of America Comment on FY 2007 NSF Appropriations

On 3 May 2006, AIBS president Kent Holsinger and Ecological Society of America president Nancy Grimm sent a joint letter to members of the House Appropriations Committee. The letter encouraged members of the committee to do all in their power to provide the National Science Foundation with the \$6.02 billion requested by the administration for fiscal year 2007. The request represents a significant upward bump at a time when most agencies are slated to receive a budget cut.

The letter further expressed strong support for the NSF Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) and the NSF's formal and informal science education programs. The FY 2007 request would provide BIO with a 5.4 percent increase, putting the directorate at \$607.8 million, which would be the first time BIO crosses the \$600 million threshold.

To read the letter and other AIBS statements on the FY 2007 budget, visit www.aibs.org.

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original articles in English

- "Designer Babies: Ethical Considerations," by Nicholas Agar, senior lecturer in the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science, and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
- "Agroforestry and the Maintenance of Biodiversity," by Peter Bichier, research associate at the Migratory Bird Center of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, Washington, DC
- "Planetary Biodiversity Inventories: A Response to the Taxonomic Crisis," by Lawrence M. Page, adjunct curator of fishes at the University of Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville

Spanish translations of previously posted articles

- "La Agroforestería y el Mantenimiento de la Biodiversidad" [Agroforestry and the Maintenance of Biodiversity], by Peter Bichier, Smithsonian National Zoological Park, Washington, DC
- "La Metabolómica Ambiental: El Estudio de las Enfermedades y la Toxicidad en la Vida Silvestre" [Environmental Metabolomics: The Study of Disease and Toxicity in Wildlife], by Mark R. Viant, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

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

Public Policy Report for 8 May 2006

- Members of Congress among those expressing concern with Smithsonian Showtime Networks partnership
- EPA library network poised for cut
- AIBS and Ecological Society of America send letter to appropriators in support of NSF
- Two new members assigned to House Science Committee
- President Bush announces his intent to name new USGS director
- USGS report assesses national stream and ground water quality
- New in *BioScience*: "Are There Signs of Life in the Innovation Budget?"
- From the *Federal Register*

Public Policy Report for 24 April 2006

- Canadian grant-making body questions evolution
- US Fish and Wildlife Service requests comments on CITES
- Endangered Species Act reauthorization stalls in the Senate
- NOAA seeks comments on ecosystem research and science enterprise panel
- From the *Federal Register*

