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AIBS*news*

JUNE 2007/VOLUME 57 NUMBER 6

Biologists Visit Lawmakers, Advocate Greater Investment in Research

Nearly 40 scientists and graduate students were in Washington, DC, 18–19 April, to participate in a congressional visits event cosponsored by the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition (BESC) and the Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM). AIBS and the Ecological Society of America formed BESC in 2002.

The two-day event began with a briefing by senior members of the science policy community to give participants an insider's view of the administration's research and development budget for fiscal year 2008. Providing the update were Kei Koizumi, program director of the R&D Budget and Policy Program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Jim Collins, assistant director for biological sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF); Anna Palmisano, deputy administrator for competitive programs at the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA); Jane Silverthorne, senior policy analyst at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and Jacqlyn Schneider, legislative assistant to Representative Jim Costa (D–CA).

After the briefing, participants traveled to Capitol Hill to attend a BESC/CoFARM-sponsored reception for Senators Tom Harkin (D–IA) and Kit Bond (R–MO). The senators were recognized for their work as proponents of biological and agricultural science research funding.

On the second day of the event, scientists fanned out across Capitol Hill in multidisciplinary teams to visit over 40 House and Senate offices, representing 23 different states. In their meetings, BESC/CoFARM scientists and staff discussed the importance of strong investment in basic biological and agricultural sciences research. Participants advocated an increase in research funding for all disciplines funded by the NSF, particularly the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO), as well as the National Research Initiative, the extramural competitive grants program at the USDA.



AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leader Award winners attended a reception at the Capitol with senior members of the science community. From left to right are Jenna Jadin, Amber Szoboszlai, Robert Gropp (AIBS director of public policy), Kyle Brown, and Sarah Wright. Photograph: Megan Kelhart.

In recounting their personal experiences, scientists explained how investments in basic biological and agricultural research provide not only opportunities to train graduate and undergraduate students but also answers to some of the nation's most pressing scientific challenges. Given that the NSF BIO funds 68 percent of fundamental (nonmedical) biological sciences research, scientists expressed grave concerns to lawmakers about the relatively flat budget for BIO over the last six years; they pointed out that grant funding rates for the directorate have dipped to an average of 14 percent.

Also participating in the event were scientists representing AIBS and its member societies, including two recipients of the 2007 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leader Award (EPPLA), Amber Szoboszlai, of Moss Landing Labs, and Sarah Wright, of the University of Wisconsin. EPPLA honorable mention recipients Kyle Brown, of Harvard University, and Jenna Jadin, of the University of Maryland, were also in attendance.

AIBS Public Policy Office Gives Congressional Testimony in Support of Biological Research

In April, AIBS director of public policy Robert Gropp gave testimony to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of increased funding in fiscal year (FY) 2008 for the National Science Foundation (NSF). The president's budget request would provide

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$6.43 billion for the NSF in FY 2008, including only a 4.1 percent increase for the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO), well below the average 7.7 percent increase proposed for other programs in the NSF's Research and Related Activities account.

BIO provides 68 percent of the federal grant support for fundamental biological research conducted at universities and nonprofit research centers. Yet, in 2006, the average funding rate across the directorate was only 14 percent. Thus, for BIO funding to keep pace with the need and demand for biological sciences research, AIBS encouraged Congress to provide at least $20 million more than the president's request for the NSF; this level of increased funding would enable the NSF to provide BIO with a 7 percent increase for FY 2008.

AIBS also provided testimony in support of increased funding for the US Geological Survey (USGS) and its biological research programs. Gropp asked Congress to boost funding for the Department of the Interior's science agency to $1.2 billion. Concern is growing that the USGS may be unable to meet its needs without greater funding. The agency has faced flat funding levels over the last decade, despite sponsoring research programs that provide vital, timely, and reliable information.

The full text of the testimony is available at *www.aibs.org/position-statements.*

A New Museum for Natural History in Virginia

A natural history museum recently opened its doors in Martinsville, Virginia. The Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH), a state agency under the secretary of natural resources and the official natural history museum of Virginia, is a member organization of AIBS and the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

Eight internationally known curators, 50 staff members, and 22 million collection items moved from a former school building into a $28 million, 8400-square-meter facility in late March 2007. The new facility includes a high-definition digital theater, conference rooms, offices, classrooms, a resource center, nine labs, storage facilities, a café, and a museum store.

The VMNH, which is affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, is accredited by the American Association of Museums. Its mission is to foster understanding and appreciation of Virginia's natural resources through education, research, collections, publications, and exhibits. Nicholas Fraser, director of research and collections and curator of vertebrate paleontology at the VMNH, commented, "We're trying to get the visitor to understand how science works" (*Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 27 March). In particular, the VMNH seeks to target specific audiences whose exposure to science and natural history is often limited. To that end, the museum sends traveling exhibits to youth correctional facilities, schools, and other sites in Virginia's depressed rural and urban areas.

On display now at the VMNH are "Feathered Dinosaurs of China" and "Chinasaurs: The Great Dinosaurs of China." Among forthcoming exhibits are "How Nature Works: Life," "How Nature Works: Rocks," and "Uncovering Virginia."

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Executive Director's Recent Blog Entry Online at *http://blogs.aibs.org/richardogrady*

- Encyclopedia of Life web site project launches

Recent Articles Online at *www.actionbioscience.org*

"Students Speak Out" article

- "Agricultural Biotechnology and Pest Control," by Vitalis Wafula Wekesa, doctoral student, University of São Paulo, Brazil

Spanish translations of previously posted articles

- "Reintroducción de la Megafauna: ¿Leones y Camellos en Norteamérica?" [Rewilding Megafauna: Lions and Camels in North America?], interview with Connie Barlow, science writer

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- "La Peligrosa Promesa de la Terapia de Genes" [The Dangerous Promise of Gene Therapy], by Sophia M. Kolehmainen, Council for Responsible Genetics

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

Public Policy Report for 11 May 2007

- House authorizes NSF, NIST
- Evolution education updates
- Savannah River Ecology Laboratory: Gone for good?
- American Competitiveness Council releases final report
- New in *BioScience:* "Wildlife Triggers Change in Congressional Debate on Climate"
- From the *Federal Register*

Public Policy Report for 30 April 2007

- A big week for innovation legislation
- NSF reauthorization included in America COMPETES legislation
- NSB and NGA hold hearing on "Innovation America!"
- Commitment to grad education vital to competitiveness
- From the *Federal Register*
- Now available: AIBS *110th Congress Directory*
- Graduate student science policy internship at AIBS

Public Policy Report for 16 April 2007

- AIBS PPO congressional testimony in support of increased FY 08 funding for NSF
- Proposed legislation would support communications training for science graduate students
- GBIF requests input
- Tech-NO education
- Now available: The AIBS directory to the 110th Congress
- Graduate student science policy internship at AIBS
- From the *Federal Register*

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The classified section of *BioScience* includes notices of positions available, research awards and fellowships, and meetings and seminars. Both display classifieds and line classifieds are available.

How to submit an ad. For information on both display and line classified advertisements and deadlines, contact John Rasanen, American Geological Institute; telephone: 703-379-2480, ext. 224; fax: 703-379-7563; e-mail: jrasanen@aibs.org. Lead time is approximately two months before the issue date.

Rates. Line classified advertisements are $2.00 per word, with a 50-word minimum. Contact John Rasanen for information on the costs of including borders or logos in line classifieds and for information on display classified rates (*www.aibs.org/bioscience/advertise.html*). Frequency discounts are available.

Free online posting. All classified advertising will also be posted on the AIBS Web site (*www.aibs.org*) at no additional charge. *BioScience* reserves the right to edit or decline to publish advertisements. Classified advertisements will be edited and typeset according to *BioScience* style.

The BioScience *calendar is published in every issue. Announcements must be received at least two months* (*by the first of the month*) *before publication. Address correspondence to CALENDAR,* BioScience, *1444 I Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005; e-mail: spotter@aibs.org.*

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Calendar of meetings

June

1–2 **Southern California Academy of Sciences,** Fullerton, CA; *http://scas.jsd.claremont.edu/annual/annual.html*

3–7 **North American Benthological Society,** Columbia, SC; *www.benthos.org/Meeting/index.htm*

4–7 **Society for Economic Botany,** Chicago; *www.econbot.org/_organization_/index.php?sm=07/meetings_by_year/2007*

4–9 **Intensive Bioethics Course,** sponsored by the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, Washington, DC; *http://kennedyinstitute.georgetown.edu/*

6–10 **American Society of Mammalogists,** Albuquerque, NM; *http://asm007.unm.edu/*

9–13 **Society for In Vitro Biology,** Indianapolis, IN; *www.sivb.org/meetings.asp*

10–15 **Society of Wetland Scientists,** Sacramento, CA; *www.sws.org/sacramento2007/index.html*

16–20 **Society of Systematic Biologists,** Christchurch, New Zealand; *www.evolution2007.com/*

16–20 **American Society of Naturalists,** Christchurch, New Zealand; *www.evolution2007.com/*

19–23 **Cooper Ornithological Society,** Moscow, ID; *www.dfa.uidaho.edu/ceis/conferences/cooper/*

21–25 **From Alaska to Chiapas: The First North American Parasitology Congress,** Merida, Mexico; *www.mda.cinvestav.mx/aspmsp07/main.php?lang=en*

23–27 **US Society for Ecological Economics,** New York; *www.ussee.org/conference.htm*

26–30 **American Public Gardens Association,** Washington, DC; *www.aabga.org/web/2006/06/annual_conference.aspx*

July

1–5 **Society for Conservation Biology,** Port Elizabeth, South Africa; *www.nmmu.ac.za/scb/*

7–11 **American Society of Plant Biologists,** Chicago; *www.aspb.org/meetings/pb-2007/index.cfm*

7–11 **American Society of Plant Taxonomists,** Chicago; *www.2007.botanyconference.org/*

7–11 **Botanical Society of America,** Chicago; *www.2007.botanyconference.org/*

8–12 **Poultry Science Association,** San Antonio, TX; *http://adsa.psa.ampa.asas.org/meetings/2007/*

8–12 **13th International Congress of Radiation Research,** San Francisco*; http://171.65.6.67/icrr2007/homeflash.htm*

8–12 **International Association for Landscape Ecology,** Wageningen, The Netherlands; *http://iale 2007.com*

11–16 **Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles,** St. Louis, MO; *www.dce.ksu.edu/conf/jointmeeting/*

11–16 **American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists,** St. Louis, MO; *www.asih.org/annualmeetings*

13–17 **American Arachnological Society,** Selinsgrove, PA; *www.americanarachnology.org/AAS_Meetings/AAS_meetings.html*

14–15 **Society for the Study of Evolution,** Zurich, Switzerland; *www.systbot.unizh.ch/mediterranean/index.htm*

15–19 **Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation,** Morelia, Mexico; *www.atbio.org/meetings.html*

15–20 **American Malacological Society,** Antwerp, Belgium; *www.malacological.org/meetings/next.html*

21–25 **Animal Behavior Society**, Burlington, VT; *www.animalbehavior.org/Burlington07/44th-annual-meeting-site-content/about-the-2007-annual-meeting*

28–August 1 **Society of Nematologists,** San Diego; *www.nematologists.org/*

28–August 1 **American Phytopathological Society,** San Diego; *http://meeting.apsnet.org/*

29–August 2 **Society for Industrial Microbiology,** Denver, CO; *www.simhq.org/meetings/meetings.aspx*

31–August 3 **Society for Mathematical Biology,** San Jose, CA; *www.smb.org/meetings/annual.shtml*

August

5–9 **Mycological Society of America,** Baton Rouge, LA; *www.msafungi.org*

5–10 **International Society of Protistologists,** Providence, RI; *www.uga.edu/protozoa/meetings/future_meet.html#ISOP_PSA*

5–10 **Ecological Society of America,** San Jose, CA; *www.esa.org/sanjose*

5–10 **Phycological Society of America,** Providence, RI; *www.psaalgae.org/ops/psa2007.shtm*

8–11 **American Ornithologists' Union,** Laramie, WY; *www.aou.org/meetings/2007/index.php3*

12–16 **American Bryological and Lichenological Society,** Xalapa, Mexico; *www.filogenetica.org/ABLS07/default.htm*

12–18 **International Association of Theoretical and Applied Limnology,** Montreal; *www.sil2007.org*

23–26 **Cell Stress Society International,** Budapest, Hungary; *www.cellstress.uconn.edu/conferences.html#anchor381593*

September

2–6 **American Fisheries Society,** San Francisco; *www.fisheries.org/sf/*

13–16 **Organization of Biological Field Stations,** Llano River Field Station, TX; *www.obfs.org/annual_meetings/2007/Texas.html*

22–26 **The Wildlife Society,** Tucson, AZ; *www.wildlife.org/conference/index.cfm*

27–28 **Association of Ecosystem Research Centers,** Washington, DC; *www.ecosystemresearch.org/2007%20Meeting/index.htm*

30–October 3 **Entomological Society of Canada,** Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada; *http://esc-sec.org/agm.htm*

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