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AIBS*news*

MAY 2008/VOLUME 58 NUMBER 5

Plan to Attend! AIBS Annual Meeting, 12–13 May, to Examine Linkages among Infectious Diseases and Climate Change

The 2008 AIBS annual meeting will take place at the Westin Arlington Gateway hotel in Arlington, Virginia, a two-minute walk from the National Science Foundation building and the Ballston Metro station. The program chair is AIBS President Rita Colwell, of the University of Maryland at College Park. The theme is Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases. Registration and poster submission forms are online at *www.aibs.org/annual-meeting/annual_meeting_2008.html.*

Program and Schedule

Opening Remarks

- 2008 AIBS President Rita Colwell, University of Maryland, College Park

Keynote Speaker

- Terry L. Maple, president and CEO of the Palm Beach Zoo, and coauthor, with Newt Gingrich, of *A Contract with the Earth*

Plenary Speakers

(in order of presentation)

- James E. Hansen (National Aeronautics and Space Administration): "Global Warming: The Threat to Life"
- Durland Fish (Yale University): "Environmental Determinants of Lyme Disease Risk"
- Howard Frumkin (National Center for Environmental Health): "The Public Health Response to Climate Change"
- David Rogers (University of Oxford): "Infectious Diseases and the Environment"
- Stephen Morse (Columbia University): "How Could Climate Change Affect Avian Influenza?"
- Andrew Dobson (Princeton University): "Disentangling the Role of Climate, Immunity, and Biotic Interactions in the Dynamics of Infectious Diseases"
- Duane Gubler (University of Hawaii): "The 20th Century Emergence and Spread of Epidemic Dengue/Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever: Is Climate or Environmental Change Responsible?"
- Stephen Hoffman (Sanaria Inc., Rockville, Maryland): "The Role of Radiation-attenuated *Plasmodium falciparum* Sporozoite Vaccine in Global Malaria Eradication"

Endnote Speaker

- 2008 AIBS President Rita Colwell

Special Sessions

- Special Session 1: "Science and Society: The Art of Communication"
  Convenor: AIBS

  Moderator: Ira Flatow, host of National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation: Science Friday*

  Participants: Robert Morris (author of *The Blue Death: Disease, Disaster, and the Water We Drink*) and Kim Stanley Robinson (author of *Sixty Days and Counting*)
- Special Session 2: "Climate Change and Human Health: Developing Collaborations with the Public Health Community"

  Convenor: National Council for Science and the Environment

Workshops

- Workshop 1: "Your Classroom: Integrating Case Studies and Evolution to Help Students Understand Infectious Disease"

  Convenors: Biological Sciences Curriculum Study and the National Association of Biology Teachers
- Workshop 2: "A Scientist Walks into a Bar: Using Science Cafés to Reach the Public"

  Convenors: WGBH Educational Foundation and the Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science

AIBS Testifies about Need for Increased Funding for Biological Research

In March, the AIBS Public Policy Office submitted congressional testimony in

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NEON Completes Selection of Candidate Sites

NEON Welcomes Its Director of Procurement and Contracts

Recent Executive Director's Blog Entries Online at *http://blogs.aibs.org/richardo grady*

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

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support of increased funding in fiscal year (FY) 2009 for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the US Geological Survey (USGS), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

AIBS encouraged Congress to provide the NSF with $7.326 billion for FY 2009, the funding level authorized by the America COMPETES Act (P.L. 110-69). Nearly $500 million more than the president requested, the higher funding levels would allow the NSF to increase the Biological Sciences directorate (BIO) by 19 percent over the FY 2008 appropriation. This would place BIO more on par with the growth trajectory of research directorates in the physical sciences, which are slated to receive 19 to 20 percent increases in FY 2009 (compared with the 10.3 percent increase for the BIO requested by the president).

AIBS testimony in support of the USGS encourages Congress to allocate $1.3 billion for fiscal year 2009, including $230 million for the programs of the Biological Resources Discipline (BRD). The president's FY 2009 budget request for the USGS is $969 million, $38 million below the enacted FY 2008 budget, and several of the programs within the BRD would experience significant budget cuts if the budget were passed as is.

AIBS also submitted testimony asking Congress to provide at least $646.5 million for the Office of Research and Development within the EPA, $181 million of which would be for human health and ecosystem research.

All congressional testimony is posted in the position statements section of the AIBS Web site (*www.aibs.org/position-statements)*. Additional information about the federal budget process is available at the AIBS Public Policy Office Federal Budget Resource Web page (*www.aibs.org/public-policy/budget_source.html*).

AIBS, ESA Coauthor Budget Analysis

Robert Gropp, AIBS director of public policy, and Nadine Lymn, public affairs director of the Ecological Society of America, teamed together to analyze the fiscal year (FY) 2009 budget request for biological and ecological sciences programs in the federal government.

The analysis, which appears as a chapter in the *American Association for the Advancement of Science Report XXXIII: Research and Development FY 2009,* offers insights into recent federal policy initiatives that affect federal funding for the biological sciences. The chapter analyzes recent funding patterns and policy directions of six federal agencies that administer intramural and extramural research programs for the biological sciences: the National Science Foundation, the US Department of Agriculture, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, and the US Geological Survey. To keep up to date on federal budget developments, visit the AIBS public policy Web site (*www.aibs.org/public-policy*) or sign up to receive free, biweekly public policy reports (*www.aibs.org/public-policy-signup*).

AIBS Writes to Oklahoma Senate

AIBS recently wrote to members of the Rules Committee of the Oklahoma State Senate to express serious concerns with House Bill 2211, the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act. If it had been enacted, the legislation would have had serious negative consequences on science education in Oklahoma.

Like legislation signed into law in Texas by Governor Perry (R) in June 2007, the "academic freedom" bill that moved through the Oklahoma legislature in March would have explicitly permitted public school students to express religious viewpoints and beliefs in classroom assignments and at public events featuring student speakers.

AIBS wrote: "HB 2211 grants permission to individuals with specific, narrow religious agendas to disrupt the teaching of evolutionary science in Oklahoma public school classrooms. This legislation would allow nonscientific concepts, such as creationism and 'intelligent design,' to be taught as though they are accepted scientific principles, which they are not. To require that teachers accept nonscientific explanations for natural phenomena is counter to quality science education. Further, it risks setting the students of Oklahoma well behind their national and international counterparts."

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House Bill 2211 passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives on 13 March 2008 by a 71 to 25 vote. Senate leadership assigned the bill to the Senate Rules Committee rather than to the Education Committee; the bill died on 2 April 2008.

Science education advocates in Oklahoma reported that the rules committee received a large number of letters and calls opposing the measure. Evolution advocates remain vigilant—the bill could reappear as an amendment to other legislation.

The AIBS letter is online at *www.aibs.org/position-statements/*.

ActionBioscience.org Seeks Lesson Writers

ActionBioscience.org offers original lessons written by science educators specifically to accompany online articles. Each lesson includes article content and extension questions as well as activity handouts for a variety of grade levels. Articles and lessons are correlated to National Science Education Standards.

ActionBioscience.org is actively seeking people to write additional lessons. Educators whose lessons are published on ActionBioscience.org will receive an honorarium of $100 per lesson and will be acknowledged online as authors. ActionBioscience.org will retain exclusive Internet rights to the published material, but authors can reprint their lessons in any other format.

AIBS and the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) have partnered to offer a special arrangement for NABT members. Lesson writers who are also NABT members will receive 18 hours of professional development credit for lessons published on ActionBioscience.org. Once a lesson writer has submitted a lesson and it is accepted for online publication, the editor will contact NABT, and the author will be sent the accreditation letter. We encourage NABT members to take advantage of this arrangement.

To review lessons already posted on the site, visit the lesson directory at *www.actionbioscience.org/lessondirectory.html*. Please write to editor@actionbioscience.org to request further information or to express your interest in writing a lesson.

NEON Completes Selection of Candidate Sites

Science staff from the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) recently confirmed all 20 locations of candidate core sites chosen for the continental-scale ecological research platform. Each candidate site has been selected to represent the unique ecological and climate variability of its NEON domain within the network. Sixteen candidate sites are located in the lower 48 US states, Alaska hosts two, and Hawaii and Puerto Rico have one site each.

Candidate site locations are now confirmed in three domains where decisions were pending—the mid-Atlantic, the Great Lakes, and the Southern Plains. In the mid-Atlantic, NEON staff selected the Smithsonian Institution Conservation Research Center in Front Royal, Virginia. For the Great Lakes domain, the choice was the University of Notre Dame Environmental Research Center/Trout Lake Biological Station in Boulder Junction, Wisconsin. For the Southern Plains, staff chose the Caddo National Grassland and the Lyndon B. Johnson National Grassland in Texas.

"We conducted a rigorous process to recommend candidate sites for the three remaining domains," said Michael Keller, NEON chief of science. "Our decision-making was guided by a single set of requirements."

Each candidate site was required to

- be located in a wildland area representative of the vegetation, soils, landforms, climate, and ecosystems performance of its domain;
- provide access to gradient and relocatable sites that respond to regional and continental-scale science questions;
- meet the logistical and administrative criteria of year-round access, available permitting, and secure land tenure for 30 years; and
- meet the technical criteria of unimpeded air space for regular air survey and potential for an experimental set-aside.

Beyond these criteria, a second group of desirable considerations focused on logistical, administrative, and technical factors. These included site security, facilities for power and communications, knowledge of local land-use history, and appropriate locations for micrometeorological flux and aquatic measurements.

Next step: Site assessments. In 2007, four teams of ecological experts made initial visits to seven NEON candidate core sites; detailed site assessments are now under way. Thorough site evaluations in all 20 NEON domains will enable observatory staff to refine the scientific, technical, logistical, and financial planning documents needed for upcoming NEON reviews.

The first round of site assessments began in late March with visits to two domains: the Southeast, based at the Ordway-Swisher Biological Station in Gainesville, Florida; and the Atlantic Neotropical, located at the Guánica Forest, Puerto Rico.

NEON is collaborating with the US Geological Survey in the evaluation process, using USGS vegetation maps for the entire United States to establish a preliminary design for every candidate site. The maps are being shared with representatives at each location before the site visit.

"We have preliminary activities, mapping activities, and the actual visits," Keller said. "We will test the design during the actual visit, when we probe scientific and logistical matters on the ground. We will look at tower placements, vegetation plots, potential hazards, and limits to accessibility. We will also focus in detail on all of the Fundamental Sentinel Unit activities." (The NEON Fundamental Sentinel Unit will measure soil and aquatic biogeochemistry in each domain, and track patterns and changes in a variety of organisms, including birds, fish, plants, small mammals, and microbes.)

Another important consideration for project staff and the NEON, Inc., Board

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of Directors is to make certain that observatory activities have the least possible impact on the landscape during the estimated 30-year lifespan of the project. The objective is to monitor the environment, not to have impacts on it.

"Good environmental stewardship goes hand in hand with good science," Keller said. "We want to be observing site characteristics, not site disturbance."

NEON has scheduled the next round of visits to five candidate sites in spring 2008. The itinerary includes a variety of US ecoclimatic domains: the Ozarks Complex, anchored in the Talladega National Forest, Alabama; the Appalachians and Cumberland Plateau, located in the Walker Branch Watershed, Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Prairie Peninsula, at the Konza Prairie Biological Station, Manhattan, Kansas; Desert Southwest, anchored at the Santa Rita Experimental Range, Arizona; and the Pacific Northwest, at the Wind River Experimental Forest, Washington.

NEON Welcomes Its Director of Procurement and Contracts

Patti Ashley is the NEON director of procurement and contracts. The position is based at the Science and Education Office in Boulder, Colorado.

Ashley and her staff will work to ensure that NEON observes the highest standards and best practices in acquiring a variety of field instrumentation, as well as services from federal agencies and private companies.

"If I had to summarize my role at NEON, I would say it is to get the most in return for the investment that US taxpayers and the National Science Foundation are making," Ashley said. "In addition, I want to develop relationships between NEON and environmentally responsible suppliers."

Immediately before she joined NEON, Ashley served in the Acquisition and Procurement Office of Washington Headquarters Services. As supervisory contracting officer, she managed a team of junior and senior contract specialists in all phases of the procurement process for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy), the National Security Education Program, and the Department of Defense's Office of General Counsel.

During her career with the National Science Foundation (NSF), Ashley excelled in a variety of assignments that have prepared her well for her position at NEON, including having responsibility for environmental projects and construction activities.

As senior contracting officer at the NSF Cooperative Support Office, she was responsible for planning, advising, and managing awards for a major federally funded research and development center, and other complex, large-dollar research projects and facilities. Also at the NSF, Ashley led negotiations for multiple science vessel shipbuilding and conversion projects under the Ocean Sciences Division, awarded a complex cooperative agreement for the Collaborative Large-scale Engineering Analysis Network for Environmental Research project, and reviewed solicitation documents for a pending competitive subcontract to convert a general marine vessel into a research vessel.

Earlier in her career, Ashley applied her skills as an administrator, contracting officer, and procurement analyst in a variety of assignments with the Department of the Navy (Naval Air Systems Command and Naval Fleet and Industrial Supply Center).

For more information about NEON, contact Dan Johnson, NEON Public Information Representative, at djohnson@neoninc.org.

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

- Organize! Research Coordination Networks for Undergraduate Biology Education

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

Public Policy Report for 14 April 2008

- Evolution, science education still under attack
- Congressional support for NSF funding
- Climate hearings focus on public health
- New in *BioScience*: "Political Science"
- From the *Federal Register*

Public Policy Report for 31 March 2008

- AIBS provides testimony to House Appropriations in support of the National Science Foundation
- Is education still OK in Oklahoma?
- Conference considers ecological elements of biofuels
- Now in the AIBS Bookstore: AIBS *110th Congress Directory* and *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*
- Register now for the AIBS annual meeting: "Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases"
- From the *Federal Register*

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