

AIBS news

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AIBS *news*

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AIBS, CSPO to Sponsor Roundtable Discussion on Scientific Integrity

On 1 February, the Department of the Interior (DOI) issued a policy intended to promote and protect scientific and scholarly integrity within the department. The policy, issued as a chapter in the departmental manual, provides essential details and procedures for the DOI-wide implementation of a September 2010 directive from Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. The policy also responds to White House directives requiring federal departments and agencies to establish scientific integrity policies.

“The DOI policy is impressive and thorough. This policy goes a long way toward providing a model for other agencies and non-governmental organizations,” said AIBS President James P. Collins. “I commend Secretary Salazar and everyone at Interior who worked on developing the department’s position in these important areas. It is an impressive accomplishment.”

The DOI scientific and scholarly integrity policy includes a number of provisions recommended by AIBS and other scientific organizations in response to a draft policy issued for comment last year.

To help advance the national dialogue about scientific integrity policy, AIBS plans a roundtable discussion at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The discussion, cosponsored by the Consortium for Science Policy Outcomes, will bring together representatives from governmental and nongovernmental organizations to discuss the ramifications, enforcement, and transferability of the DOI policy to other government agencies

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and potentially nongovernmental organizations.

The DOI scientific and scholarly integrity policy is available at http://elips.doi.gov/app_dm/act_getfiles.cfm?relnum=3889. AIBS comments on the DOI’s draft policy are available at www.aibs.org/position-statements/.

AIBS Names Emerging Public Policy Leader

AIBS has selected Wesley Brooks, a PhD candidate at Rutgers University, to receive the 2011 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA).

“AIBS is committed to fostering a productive dialogue between policymakers and scientists,” said AIBS Executive Director Richard O’Grady. “We applaud Wesley Brooks for exemplifying this commitment through his work.”

Since 2003, AIBS has recognized the achievements of biology graduate students who have demonstrated an interest and aptitude for contributing to science and public policy. In March, AIBS will bring Brooks to Washington, DC, to meet with his congressional delegation and to attend a briefing on the federal budget for scientific research. These events are in conjunction with the annual Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition Congressional Visits Day. Brooks will also receive a certificate and one-year membership in AIBS, which includes a subscription to the journal *BioScience*.

“I believe that this award will provide me with the momentum, knowledge, and interpersonal connections necessary to effectively transition from my graduate research to a long-term career in public service and science advocacy,” Brooks said.

Brooks is pursuing a PhD in ecology and evolutionary biology

at Rutgers University. His thesis research explores how fish and plant community properties affect the susceptibility of those communities to invasion by nonnative species. He hopes that his research findings will identify lower-cost alternatives for the control of invasive species. While in graduate school, Brooks was an intern with the National Center for Environmental Economics at the Environmental Protection Agency, where he contributed to the development of a computer model to more accurately project the costs of climate change. He was also a Governor’s Executive Fellow through a program at Rutgers’s Eagleton Institute of Politics.

This year, AIBS will also recognize as EPPLA honorable mention recipient Michael Jay Walsh, a PhD student in biological and environmental engineering at Cornell University.

Botanical Society Students Launch Grassroots Campaign

Recently, several student members of the Botanical Society of America developed an open letter to lawmakers to express their hope that policymakers in Washington, DC, will sustain a national commitment to invest in our nation’s scientific research, development, and education systems.

The letter encourages “Congress and the president to make sustained investments in the nation’s scientific research, education, and training programs.” It states that “the extramural, competitive, peer-reviewed grant programs administered by federal agencies are critical to our nation’s scientific enterprise and future.” Students interested in signing the letter may do so at www.aibs.org/public-policy/science_students_letter.html.

CERF to Brief Congress on Gulf of Mexico

The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF), an AIBS member organization and contributor to the AIBS Public Policy Office, will be on Capitol Hill next month to provide a scientific perspective on Gulf of Mexico ecosystems, as well as effects to society one year after the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill. The AIBS Public Policy Office has provided CERF with assistance in organizing and making arrangements for the science briefing.

"The Gulf of Mexico is vital to the US economy, supporting a large oil and gas industry, exceptional fishery production, shipping, and tourism," stated CERF President Susan Williams. "The BP oil spill is just the most recent environmental impact in a series of cumulative changes to Gulf ecosystems, which together have had significant socioeconomic consequences. CERF scientists have studied Gulf ecosystem responses to these cumulative effects over many years and can provide data-rich information on Gulf ecosystems to place the BP spill in a comprehensive perspective."

The briefing will point to advances in understanding the Gulf ecosystems and scientific gaps in knowledge that are important to address, such as the science of oil pollution in deep waters.

CERF is a private, nonprofit, non-partisan organization created in 1971 to advance understanding and wise stewardship of estuarine and coastal ecosystems worldwide. Its mission is to promote research in estuarine and coastal ecosystems; support education of scientists, decisionmakers, and the public; and facilitate communication among these groups.

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports

Public Policy Report for 28 February 2011

- **AIBS Report Analyzes President's FY 2012 Budget for Biology.** President Obama

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released a \$3.7 trillion budget plan for fiscal year 2012 on 14 February. The budget proposal would trim deficits by \$1.1 trillion over the next decade. To help accomplish this goal, nonsecurity discretionary spending would be held steady for five years. Additionally, civilian government workers would be subject to a two-year pay freeze.

- **House Passes Budget for FY 2011, Cuts Funding for Science.** On 19 February, the House of Representatives passed a bill to fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year (FY) 2011. If enacted, the bill would cut \$61 billion compared with FY 2010 appropriations. The reductions affect nearly all portions of the federal government, although homeland security is less affected than other areas. HR 1 passed the House along party lines by a vote of 235-186. No Democrats supported the measure, but three Republicans opposed it.
- **OSTP Launches R&D Dashboard to Demonstrate Impacts of Federal Science Investments.** On 10 February, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy announced the launch of a new online tool to help the public see the value of federal investments in research and development (R&D). The R&D Dashboard presents data on grant awards from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health to research institutions over the past decade. Information on awarded grants is linked to the outcomes of the funded research, such as publications, patent applications, and patents. Adding to its usefulness, the site can sort investments at the state, congressional district, and research-institution levels. In the future, the site will also include information from other federal science agencies.

To access the R&D Dashboard, visit <http://rd-dashboard.nitrd.gov/home.html>.

- **USGS Seeks Input on Ecosystem Science Strategy.** The US Geological Survey (USGS) is requesting public input to inform the development of a new ecosystem science strategy. The new strategy will guide the research activities of the agency's new ecosystem activity, which was created when the USGS reorganized in 2010.
- **High-school Student Seeks Repeal of Louisiana's Creationism Law.** Baton Rouge Magnet High School senior Zack Kopplin has launched a campaign to have the Louisiana Science Education Act repealed. The state law, which has been in place since 2008, encourages science teachers to include supplemental materials that attack evolution and promote creationism in their lessons. State Senator Karen Carter Peterson (D–District 5) will sponsor the repeal legislation. Kopplin was central in a grassroots effort last year that successfully convinced the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to approve new biology textbooks that include the teaching of evolution.
- **Graduate Student Policy Internship Available.** The American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) and AIBS are pleased to announce the availability of an internship in the Washington, DC, AIBS Public Policy Office. The internship is open to ASM members who are currently enrolled in a graduate program and who are engaged in research that will contribute to the understanding and conservation of mammals. The internship is for three months during fall 2011 and carries a generous monthly stipend. Selection criteria include

demonstrated interest in the public policy process, strong communications skills, and excellent academic record. For details and requirements, please visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html.

Public Policy Report for 14 February 2011

- **A First Look at the FY 2012 Budget.** On 14 February, the president released his official budget request for fiscal year 2012. As foreshadowed in the State of the Union address, budget increases may be in store for some science agencies such as the National Science Foundation. However, other science agencies, such as the United States Geological Survey may be facing budget cuts.
- **House Republican Spending Plan Would Slash Current Budgets.** The new majority in the House of Representatives is moving forward with plans to reduce federal spending for the remainder of fiscal year 2011, which began on 1 October 2010. Science and almost all other nonsecurity budgets have been targeted for cuts.
- **Senate Appropriations Committee Leadership, Membership Announced.** On 4 February, the Senate Committee on Appropriations announced its lineup for the 112th Congress. With the retirement and defeat of several former appropriators, the committee had multiple openings for new members, thereby allowing seven Republicans to join. All but one of these newest appropriators are freshmen; the exception is Senator Lindsey Graham (R–SC), who is currently serving his second term. The others include Senators Roy Blunt

(R–MO), Daniel Coats (R–IN), John Hoeven (R–ND), Ron Johnson (R–WI), Mark Kirk (R–IL), and Jerry Moran (R–KS).

- **USGS Seeks Comments on Global Change Science Strategy.** The US Geological Survey (USGS) is requesting comments on the “USGS Global Change Science Strategy: A Framework for Understanding and Responding to Climate and Land-Use.”
- **Obama Administration Launches Education Technology Agency.** The Department of Education has proposed a new agency to fund the development of new education technologies and to promote their use in schools. The Advanced Research Projects Agency–Education is modeled after a successful funding program at the Department of Defense called DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), which is credited with the creation of the Internet. The new agency will seek to develop and deploy technologies that will help students to learn, such as digital tutors. According to officials at the Department of Education, less than 0.1 percent of the department's budget for K–12 education is currently spent on research on how students learn.
- **Study Finds that Teachers Avoid Teaching Evolution.** According to a new study published in the journal *Science*, only 28 percent of biology teachers in public high schools teach evolution and present it as a unifying theme for biology. Conversely, 13 percent of surveyed teachers spend at least an hour of class time on the subject of creationism. The remaining 59 percent of teachers try to avoid controversy by endorsing neither evolution nor creationism and intelligent design.