

AIBS News

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AIBS *news*

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PPO Talks with Graduate Students

In September, AIBS Public Policy Director Robert Gropp traveled to the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he met with students and faculty in the Environmental Studies Department. Gropp gave a seminar that illustrated how professional scientific societies can contribute to the development of our nation's science and education policy. Additionally, the talk provided a Washington, DC, perspective on the nation's current science policy, as well as suggestions for how graduate students and early career faculty can engage in science policy and media relations to contribute to a better public understanding of science and science policy issues.

"It's always rewarding to visit a university," Gropp said. "It's especially great to see such interest in science policy and public affairs from so many graduate students. I think it shows a growing awareness that what happens in Washington, DC, impacts the work done in a research lab on a college campus."

Next month, Gropp will travel to South Bend, Indiana, to speak with the graduate students in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Notre Dame.

For more information about presentations by the AIBS Public Policy Office, please visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/resources/AIBS_PPO_Presentation_and_Workshop_Info.pdf, or send an inquiry by e-mail to publicpolicy@aibs.org.

Randy Moore Receives 2008 Evolution Education Award

The National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) presented Randy Moore, a professor of biology at the University of Minnesota, with the 2008 Evolution Education Award during the NABT annual conference that was held 15–18 October in Memphis, Tennessee.

The Evolution Education Award, which is cosponsored by AIBS and the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS), is presented in recognition of innovative classroom teaching and community education efforts to promote the accurate understanding of biological evolution. Moore will receive a plaque, a \$1000 cash prize, and a set of educational resources to support the teaching of evolution.

"This is a great honor, especially considering the roles AIBS and BSCS have played in defending the teaching of evolution. Helping students understand and appreciate nature is a basic goal of every science teacher, and few ideas in science can do a better job of that than evolution," Moore said, upon learning that he had been selected to receive the award.

For nearly 30 years, Moore has based his teaching of biology explicitly on evolution. His introductory biology courses, for example, do not treat evolution as a discrete topic; rather, his instruction incorporates evolution as a unifying element of modern biology.

"The evidence supporting evolution is overwhelming and comes from diverse disciplines, such as molecular biology, paleontology, comparative anatomy, ethology, and biochemistry," Moore says. "There is no controversy among biologists about whether evolution occurs, nor are there science-based alternative theories. Evolution is a unifying theme in biology; teaching it as such is the best way to show students what biology is about and how they can use evolution as a tool to understand our world. [Evolution] is as important an idea as there is in science—it is a great gift to give to students."

Moore has worked beyond the classroom to improve public understanding of science and to help K–12 teachers continue to develop skills to effectively teach science. He has taught several summer

workshops for K–12 teachers, spoken to local groups of teachers and school districts, and organized a learning-abroad course titled "Evolution and the Biology of the Galápagos." Additionally, Moore was a founding member of the Minnesota Citizens for Science Education, a grassroots organization that defends the teaching of evolution in local schools.

Moore has worked to build dialogue between science and religious groups. "I grew up with, understand, and respect religious traditions," he said. "I strongly oppose the teaching of creationism in science classes, not only because it is not science, but [also because] it is unlawful. Distorting science to placate particular religious views is not only bad pedagogy; it also belittles faith."

Mark Decker, a colleague of Moore's at the University of Minnesota, is pleased about Moore's recognition. Decker says of Moore's accomplishments: "I have been with Randy on campus when we

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encounter a former student [who] stops and thanks Randy for his class, and whenever I have his former students in my classes, they are all effusive in their praise for him." Decker further commends Moore for his scholarship, noting that he works to publish timely research on evolution education that is relevant to instructors.

Moore earned his bachelor's degree in biology from Texas A&M University, a master's degree in botany from the University of Georgia, and his PhD in biology from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Previous honors and awards for Moore include the Case/Carnegie Teacher of the Year (University of Minnesota), Honorary Member of National Association of Biology Teachers, Most Outstanding Research-Teaching Award from the National Association of Biology Teachers, Outstanding Undergraduate Science Teacher from the National Association of Science Teachers, and Outstanding Professor recognition from Baylor University and from Wright State University.

USGS Coalition Reception Recognizes Congressional Leaders

On 15 September, the US Geological Survey (USGS) Coalition held its fifth annual Capitol Hill reception. Representatives Norman D. Dicks (D-WA) and Ralph Regula (R-OH) were presented with the first USGS Coalition Leadership Award in recognition of their enduring support for the USGS. Representative Dicks chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies; Representative Regula is former chair of the subcommittee. Additionally, the USGS Coalition reception highlighted the research, information sharing, and services that the USGS provides to the nation.

This year more than 150 people from Congress, executive branch departments, and nongovernmental organizations attended the reception. The USGS Coalition Capitol Hill reception was initiated five years ago to raise congressional awareness of the important research conducted by USGS scientists, and as a way

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to recognize the many congressional champions for the USGS.

"The US Geological Survey is one of the nation's premiere science agencies. It benefits the lives of every American," said Craig Schiffries, cochair of the USGS Coalition and director for geoscience policy at the Geological Society of America. "Representatives Dicks and Regula are being honored for promoting the important science sponsored by the US Geological Survey and for providing the agency with the funding required to address many of our nation's most pressing challenges."

Robert Gropp, USGS Coalition cochair and director of public policy at AIBS, said: "The need for science in support of public policy decisionmaking has never been greater. USGS scientists produce knowledge that supports policy to ensure clean water, assess energy resources, and inform wise wildlife and ecosystem management. Representatives Dicks and Regula have long recognized this and worked to provide the agency with the resources necessary to serve our nation."

In accepting the award, Representative Dicks spoke extensively about the important work conducted by USGS scientists, whether related to earthquakes, volcanoes, wildlife, or water quality. He further stressed the important role that the USGS must play in studying how earth systems, including biological systems, will respond to climate change. Although Representative Regula was unable to attend the reception, his chief of staff attended and spoke on his behalf.

The USGS Coalition is an alliance of 70 organizations united by a commitment to the continued vitality of the unique combination of biological, geological, hydrological, and mapping programs of the USGS. The USGS provides independent, high-quality data, information, research support, and assessments that are needed by federal, state, local, and tribal policymakers; resource and emergency managers; engineers and planners; and researchers, educators, and the public. The coalition supports increased federal investment in USGS programs that underpin responsible natural resource stewardship, improve resilience to natural

and human-induced hazards, and contribute to the long-term health, security, and prosperity of the nation.

AIBS was a founding member of the USGS Coalition, which now includes more than a dozen AIBS member societies and organizations. The coalition is cochaired by AIBS and the Geological Society of America. USGS Coalition activities and initiatives are the result of the staff efforts of the various participating organizations. Policy staff members from the Crop, Soil, and Agronomy societies planned the 2008 congressional reception.

Scientists Brief Policymakers on Climate Change and Ecosystems

With an ever-increasing number of reports showing that climate change will affect human health, economic and national security, and agricultural and natural resource management, policymakers are paying more attention to the issue of climate change and trying to understand how best to respond. Legislation has been introduced to implement cap-and-trade systems and carbon taxes, and to promote carbon sequestration. Informed policy decisions require that policymakers understand the potential role of ecosystems in mitigating the problems caused by carbon emissions. On 25 September, the Association of Ecosystem Research Centers (AERC), an AIBS member society, held a special science briefing for policymakers in Washington, DC. The briefing, "Climate Change: A Role for Ecosystems," was held in conjunction with AERC's annual science meeting, and was conducted with the assistance of AIBS Public Policy Office staff.

The briefing allowed policymakers to hear directly from six leading ecosystem researchers, who shared key findings on carbon sequestration in different ecosystems.

Speakers and their presentations are listed below:

- Robin Graham, of Oak Ridge National Laboratory: "Environmental Policy and Carbon Sequestration by Ecosystems"

- Ken Buesseler, of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution: "Ocean Fertilization: Ironing Out Uncertainties in Climate Engineering"
- Peter Curtis, of the Ohio State University: "Forest Carbon Storage in the Upper Midwest: Lessons from the Past and Predictions for the Future"
- J. Patrick Megonigal, of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center: "Carbon In, Methane Out: The Greenhouse Gas Balance of North American Wetlands"
- Charles Rice, of Kansas State University: "Carbon Sequestration in Agroecosystems"
- John Arnone, of the Desert Research Institute: "Carbon Sequestration in Deserts"

The timely and useful nature of the 2008 briefing drew a large audience and even broader interest from the policy community. Roughly 50 people attended the science briefing for policymakers, including representatives from key congressional offices and executive branch agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. In 2007, AERC held a comparably successful briefing to explore the state of our scientific understanding of the ecosystem-related issues associated with the nation's bioenergy policy. AERC plans to convene another science briefing in Washington, DC, next fall. For more information about AERC or to view the presentations from the 2008 briefing online, please visit www.ecosystemresearch.org.

AIBS at the NSDL Annual Meeting

Partners of the National Science Digital Library (NSDL) met in Washington, DC, 30 September–2 October to discuss new directions. The eight-year-old National Science Foundation initiative was designed to leverage online educational STEM opportunities for students and learners of all ages nationwide.

Many partners and projects have been part of NSDL since 2000, and AIBS has

been one of the founding partners of its biology education pathway, BiosciEdNet (or BEN). Oksana Hlodan, editor in chief of ActionBioscience.org, and Bernadette Farrelly, AIBS program associate for membership and community programs, attended the event to learn about collaborations and new ventures, and to explore digital resources in depth.

The theme of this year's annual meeting was "STEM Research and Education in Action." The schedule included presentations and overviews from NSDL partners who are using NSDL resources and tools for K–12 and undergraduate classrooms.

Attention Graduate Students: AIBS Accepting Applications for the 2009 EPPLA

AIBS is now accepting applications for the 2009 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA). The EPPLA program, established by AIBS in 2003, enables graduate students in the biological sciences to receive firsthand experience in the science-policy arena.

EPPLA winners will be awarded a trip to Washington, DC, to participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition Congressional Visits Day (BESC CVD) in the spring of 2009. The BESC CVD is an annual event that brings scientists and science educators to Washington to advocate for federal funding for the biological sciences.

Applications for the 2009 EPPLA will be accepted from graduate students in master's or doctoral programs in the biological sciences who have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to biological science or science education policy. The application packet must include a cover letter, a brief statement on the importance of biological science funding, a one-page résumé emphasizing leadership and communication experience, and a letter of reference from someone who can attest to the candidate's leadership, interpersonal, and communication skills.

More information about the 2009 EPPLA application and previous EPPLA recipients is online at www.aibs.org. The application deadline is Friday, 6 February 2009.

AIBS Diversity Awards for 2009: Call for Nominations

AIBS is now accepting applications and nominations for two awards geared toward promoting the participation of underrepresented minorities in the sciences. The AIBS Diversity Scholars Award, which recognizes an outstanding minority undergraduate or graduate student, consists of travel to and registration support for the AIBS annual meeting, as well as AIBS membership for a full year.

The AIBS Diversity Leadership Award recognizes a program or initiative that actively promotes a diverse biological community. Nominations from scientific societies, K–12 institutions, colleges and universities, government entities, nonprofit organizations, and community groups, as well as biological entities such as museums, botanic gardens, and field stations, are all welcomed.

The deadline for the diversity awards is 15 January 2009. For selection criteria and more information, and to download application and nomination forms, please visit the AIBS Diversity Programs Web site at www.aibs.org/diversity.

Recent Executive Director's Blog Entries Online at www.blogs.aibs.org/richardogrady

- Countdown to November 4th elections
- Comment period open for National Academies forthcoming report: *A New Biology for the 21st Century*

- AIBS adds YouTube channel to its free online collection of lectures and interviews
- Presidential candidates' science forum on energy and innovation: October 21 at Stanford University

Recent Spanish Translations of Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

- “Las Mitocondrias y el Envejecimiento” [Mitochondria and Aging], interview with Douglas C. Wallace, University of California, Irvine
- “Hacia un replanteamiento de los combustibles fósiles” [Rethinking Fossil Fuels], interview with James Hansen, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia University's Earth Institute
- “La propagación de la fiebre del dengue” [The Spread of Dengue Fever], interview with Duane J. Gubler, University of Hawaii

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

Public Policy Report for 27 October 2008

- NAS announces committee, meeting: Century of biology report
- NSC Alliance surveys collections about effects of economy

- NOAA and NIH heads step down in anticipation of “change”
- Engineered animals for food and pharmaceuticals
- From the *Federal Register*
- Now in the AIBS Bookstore: *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*

Public Policy Report for 13 October 2008

- AIBS cosponsors second Presidential Candidates' Forum
- Congress extends funding, science agencies flat
- AERC briefs policymakers on carbon sequestration by ecosystems
- Mammals perfect disappearing act
- Biology standards beefed up in the longhorn state?
- Meteorologists hold briefing on climate change and ecosystems
- New in *BioScience*: “Science Advice for the Next President”
- From the *Federal Register*

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