

## **AIBS news**

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# AIBS *news*

NOVEMBER 2009/VOLUME 59 NUMBER 10

## US Geological Survey Coalition Honors Senators at Congressional Reception

Senators Diane Feinstein (D–CA) and Lisa Murkowski (R–AK) were presented with the annual US Geological Survey (USGS) Coalition Leadership Award at a congressional reception on 14 September. They were honored for their continuing support for the USGS. Senator Feinstein chairs the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment; Senator Murkowski is the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Additionally, the USGS Coalition reception highlighted the research, information sharing, and services provided by the USGS.

“Senators Murkowski and Feinstein are keenly aware of recent volcanic eruptions in Alaska and ongoing wildfires in California,” said Craig Schiffries, cochair of the USGS Coalition and director for geoscience policy at the Geological Society of America. “The USGS provided advance warning of explosive volcanism at Alaska’s Mt. Redoubt, and it is working with other agencies to provide maps of California wildfire locations and the potential spread of fires. The USGS helps prevent natural hazards from becoming natural disasters. It plays a pivotal role in reducing risks from volcanic eruptions, wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, landslides, and other natural hazards that jeopardize human lives and cost billions of dollars in damages every year.”

Robert Gropp, cochair of the USGS Coalition and director of public policy at AIBS, added: “Data and products derived from USGS research benefit everyone. The work conducted and supported by the USGS informs drinking-water studies, biological and geological resource assessments, natural hazards monitoring, and other activities. The USGS is more essential than ever before to our national efforts as we try to conserve a

## COMING SOON

AIBS will publish an electronic newsletter starting in 2010. We need your e-mail address to send it to you—please verify your contact information at [www.aibs.org/individual-membership](http://www.aibs.org/individual-membership).

growing list of threatened species, develop sustainable and cleaner energy sources, ensure that all Americans have access to clean water, and understand how our rapidly changing environment will impact our way of life.”

USGS scientists and their collaborative partners were at the reception to discuss the vital work the USGS conducts in the biological, geographical, geological, and hydrological sciences.

## Ecosystem Scientists Brief Policymakers on Climate Impacts

The Association of Ecosystem Research Centers (AERC), an AIBS member organization, briefed policymakers on Capitol Hill about the impacts of climate change on urban ecosystems. The briefing, held 24 September, provided information about how climate change may affect urban infrastructure and water resources. Leading ecosystem researchers presented congressional staff, federal agency employees, and representatives of scientific societies with information about sea-level rise, water scarcity, urban infrastructure, and watershed planning. The briefing was held in conjunction with the annual AERC science meeting in Washington, DC. Presentations were made by Donald Boesch and Allen Davis, of the University of Maryland; Douglas Farr, architect at Farr Associates; Nancy Grimm, of Arizona State University; and Peter Groffman, of the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

For more information about AERC, please visit [www.ecosystemresearch.org](http://www.ecosystemresearch.org).

## AIBS Public Policy Office Conducts Workshop at LTER Science Meeting

AIBS public policy associate Jenna Jadin traveled to Estes Park, Colorado, in early September to participate in the 2009 Long Term Ecological Research program’s All Scientists Meeting.

Jadin presented a plenary talk that addressed science in the federal government, the federal investment in scientific research, and the efforts of AIBS to help scientists engage with policymakers. Jadin’s presentation also demonstrated how individual scientists can become advocates for science through the AIBS Legislative Action Center (<http://capwiz.com/aibs/home/>). Following the plenary presentation, Jadin conducted a two-hour workshop that, through hands-on exercises, showed participants how to develop skills that will help them become effective advocates for science.

To learn more about AIBS policy initiatives and to find out how you can secure a training workshop for your meeting or academic department, please visit [www.aibs.org/public-policy](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy) or send an e-mail to [publicpolicy@aibs.org](mailto:publicpolicy@aibs.org).

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Recent Public Policy Reports Online at [www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports)

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### Live, Free Webcast of “Evolution in Extreme Environments” Symposium

Those who cannot attend this year's National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) conference in Denver will nonetheless be able to participate in the fifth annual evolution symposium, cosponsored by AIBS and the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center. Educators and students are encouraged to tune in to the live Webcast on Friday, 13 November, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Mountain Standard Time, and to take advantage of this opportunity to hear internationally renowned researchers discuss their fascinating, cutting-edge work in “extreme” evolutionary biology. Speakers will talk about how life evolves, adapts, and flourishes in some of the most extreme environments on Earth, such as high-altitude areas, the deep-sea, Arctic ice, and caves. Classrooms around the world will be able to submit questions online and speakers will respond in real time. For full program information, including speaker names, talk titles and times, and the link to view the live Webcast, please visit [www.nescent.org/NABT09Webcast.php](http://www.nescent.org/NABT09Webcast.php) or send an e-mail to [eog@nescent.org](mailto:eog@nescent.org).

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

- National Research Council report *A New Biology for the 21st Century* looks good; focus on food, environment, energy, and health
- National Research Council releasing report, *A New Biology for the 21st Century*, on 17 September at public session

### Recent Articles Online at [www.actionbioscience.org](http://www.actionbioscience.org)

#### Original article in English

- “Birds: What Can They Tell Us about Our Planet?” Paul R. Schmidt, from the Migratory Birds for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, explains why wild birds are good indicators of

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environmental health. The article also summarizes the 2009 “State of the Birds” report, which provides some sobering facts and statistics that should be a wake-up call that motivates conservation action. You can read the article at [www.actionbioscience.org/environment/schmidt.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/environment/schmidt.html).

### Technology: An Educational Issue?

**Blog Post.** This blog about issues in educational technology discusses ways to learn and teach the biological sciences using technology at <http://teachissues.blogspot.com/>. Recent posts and discussions cover evolution symposia media and educator Web pages.

### Spanish translations of previously posted articles

- “Cierre de Playas: Ciencia Versus Percepción Pública” [Beach Closings: Science versus Public Perception], by Erika T. Jensen and Sandra L. McLellan, of the University of Wisconsin. In this article the authors suggest that the public is not being given accurate information about beach closings. Read the article in Spanish at [www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/jensen\\_mclellan.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/jensen_mclellan.html) or in English at [www.actionbioscience.org/environment/jensen\\_mclellan.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/environment/jensen_mclellan.html).
- “El Valor de los Estuarios Saludables” [The Value of Healthy Estuaries], by Robert R. Christian, of East Carolina University. Christian examines why healthy estuaries are critical to humans and wildlife. Read the article in Spanish at [www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/christian.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/christian.html) or in English at [www.actionbioscience.org/environment/christian.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/environment/christian.html).

**Recent Public Policy Reports Online**  
at [www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports)

**Public Policy Report for 29 September 2009**

- **New reports set course for biology, environmental science.** On 21 September, the National Research Council released a new report, *A New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United States Leads the Coming Biology Revolution*.
- **FY 2009 drawing to a close, FY 2010 appropriations unfinished.** Fiscal year (FY) 2009 will end on 30 September, but no FY 2010 appropriations bills have been enacted.
- **Ecosystem scientists brief policymakers.** On 24 September, the Association of Ecosystem Research Centers briefed policymakers on Capitol Hill about the impacts of climate change on urban systems.

**Public Policy Report for 14 September 2009**

- **Campaign for science collections grows stronger.** A growing number of scientists and scientific organizations have joined the campaign to ask President Obama to sign a presidential executive order for the preservation and use of scientific collections.
- **Biologist to lead National Park Service.** President Obama has nominated biologist Jon Jarvis to be the next director of the National Park Service.
- **National Research Council to release report on future of biology.** The National Research Council will host a public briefing for its new report, *A New Biology for the 21st Century*, on 17 September.
- **Obama administration taking new approach to species backlog.** The Obama administration is working to quickly make

Endangered Species Act listing decisions for hundreds of plants and animals, some of which have been on a "candidate species" waiting list for 25 years.

- **Federal reports on Chesapeake Bay recovery call for scientific investments.** On 10 September, seven federal agencies released draft reports aimed at accelerating the cleanup and recovery of the Chesapeake Bay.
- **National Institutes of Health updating women's health research priorities.** The Office of Research on Women's Health is updating its research priorities for the coming decade for the National Institutes of Health.
- **Nominations for science public service award.** The National Science Board is seeking nominations of individuals and groups who have made substantial contributions to increasing the public's understanding and appreciation of science and engineering.

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*Phi Sigma*

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**The Academic Honor Society for the Biological Sciences**

- established in 1915 for the recognition of academic excellence and research in the biological sciences
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