

AIBS News

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AIBS *news*

OCTOBER 2009/VOLUME 59 NUMBER 9

AIBS Board Elections Under Way; Polls Close 26 October

Ballots for the AIBS Board elections have been mailed; members can also vote online at www.aibs.org/vote.

At the end of 2009, the following positions become vacant on the 13-person AIBS Board of Directors: (a) president-elect, (b) treasurer, and (c) one board seat from the AIBS membership-at-large (board elections from the Council of AIBS Member Societies and Organizations are also under way at this time through a separate ballot). The president-elect serves a one-year term and automatically succeeds to a one-year term as president, then a one-year term as immediate past-president. Treasurer and board members serve three-year terms. All terms start on 1 January 2010.

AIBS thanks all of the candidates for their dedication and willingness to run for these voluntary positions. Biographical sketches and election statements are included with the online and paper ballots.

To vote, please go to the online ballot at www.aibs.org/vote and sign in with your last name and six-digit AIBS membership number (as it appears on your AIBS membership card and *BioScience* mailing label; for assistance, contact AIBS at admin@aibs.org, 703-790-1745, or 800-992-2427). A paper ballot has also been mailed to all members; if you prefer to use that ballot, please complete it and mail it to AIBS. The polls close on Monday, 26 October, at 5 p.m.

President-elect

- James P. Collins, of Arizona State University
- Michael A. Mares, of the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum for

Natural History, University of Oklahoma

Treasurer

- Robert R. Christian (current AIBS Board member), of East Carolina University, North Carolina
- Louis J. Gross (current AIBS Board member), of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and the National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis

Board member elected by the membership-at-large

- Steward T. A. Pickett (current AIBS Board member running for reelection), of the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, New York
- Muriel E. Poston, of Skidmore College, New York

Board member elected by the Council

- Carol Litchfield, of George Mason University, Virginia
- Alan Savitzky (current AIBS Board member running for reelection), of Old Dominion University, Virginia

Science Collections Seek Presidential Executive Order

Advocates for the nation's natural science collections are asking President Obama for help. Scientists and others concerned by negative trends affecting research, curation, and education at the nation's natural science collections have asked President Obama to sign an executive order that would create a federal

framework for the development of a coordinated national policy for the preservation and use of the nation's science collections. The effort, launched by the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance), an AIBS member organization, is a response to recent government and nongovernment surveys and reports that demonstrate a need for a national commitment to science collections.

The need for a formalized, federal effort is something that NSC Alliance members have discussed for years. Growing financial pressures on natural science collections when these research centers are so centrally important to the future of science and to the resolution of pressing environmental, health, and security challenges prompted NSC Alliance leaders to propose an executive order that would create a government-wide entity composed of senior government officials with the goal of preserving and promoting the use of science collections.

Writing to John Holdren, science adviser to the president and director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, NSC Alliance Presi-

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Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

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dent William Y. Brown stated: "Issuance of an executive order as framed in the [proposed order] would raise the executive branch priority of this issue to the level warranted by its importance, and would also broaden the scope of planning to include all science collections. The order is similar in form to executive order 13112 on invasive species and executive order 13089 on coral reef protection issued by President Clinton. Both of these orders remain in effect, and we recommend reference to the experience of each in consideration of the order."

Brown continued: "The science collections gathered and held by many institutions over the past half-millennium are fundamental reference points for measuring and monitoring the health of our planet. They also underpin contemporary research and education in many fields, from anthropology to zoology. Their importance has been noted by the federal government, but they have not yet received the attention and priority that is their due."

Support for the executive order from scientific organizations is strong. Shortly after the NSC Alliance asked Holdren to pursue the order, organizations ranging from the American Association of State Geologists to the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists to the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections joined several leading natural history museums to endorse the need for a presidential executive order. The letter of support provided by AIBS is available online at www.aibs.org/position-statements/20090825_aibs_letter_req.html. Additional information about the collections campaign is available on the NSC Alliance Web site at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=139>.

AIBS PPO Hosts Webinar on Communicating Science

The AIBS Public Policy Office (PPO) hosted its first Webinar in July. The program, "The HBRF Science Links Program," featured a presentation by Charles Driscoll, of Syracuse University. Driscoll, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (HBRF), described how the HBRF developed a comprehensive

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program to translate research findings from the Hubbard Brook research site to key decisionmakers ranging from the local community to the halls of Congress.

"The Science Links program will not fit all research initiatives, but it is a model that showcases the elements of a successful communications and outreach initiative," said Robert Gropp, AIBS director of public policy. "At a time when so much of what we learn from scientific research is needed to inform decisions, it is helpful to recognize the complexities and challenges associated with translating the information. The HBRF Science Links program illustrates the value in partnerships, planning, and allocating resources to these endeavors."

To learn about future Webinars related to public policy or media relations and communications, visit www.aibs.org, and subscribe to receive free AIBS Public Policy Reports by e-mail at www.aibs.org/public-policy-signup.

ActionBioscience.org Launches Mirror Site in Spanish

In response to a survey of visitors in 2004 and on additional visitor feedback, ActionBioscience.org launched a mirror site in Spanish in August 2009: www.actionbioscience.org/esp. The site reaches visitors from 175 countries in a typical year—42 percent of site visitors are from the United States, and 72 percent are from North and South America combined. The Web site's tracking service shows that the number of Hispanic visitors has increased every year, and in 2008, the greatest number of page views outside the United States came from Mexico.

The mirror site is particularly useful for US residents whose first language is not English. Educators in the United States are encouraged to assign ActionBioscience.org Spanish articles to their students of Hispanic origin. Those students may improve their scientific literacy skills, especially if they have difficulty reading scientific information in English. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "One of the challenges currently facing schools is providing equal educational opportunities to students

from various cultural backgrounds, some of whom are not proficient in English.”

A new visitor survey is available on the Spanish ActionBioscience.org site to determine visitors’ reaction to the new features. Users can access the survey on the new site’s home page or directly at www.actionbioscience.org/esp/encuesta.html. ActionBioscience.org is supported by a subaward of a National Science Foundation grant given to expand BEN (BiosciEdNet), the bioscience education digital library, and it is endorsed by the National Association of Biology Teachers.

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

- National Biological Information Infrastructure launches new search engine for online biological data
- Nice to see: Report recommends pre-med students learn about evolution

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original article in English

- “Penguins and Climate Change: Are Penguin Populations Changing?” by Shaye Wolf, a biologist for the Climate Law Institute of the Center for Biological Diversity in Arizona. Wolf examines how climate change is affecting penguins in the ocean habitats of the Southern Hemisphere. Read the article at www.actionbioscience.org/environment/wolf.html.

Technology: An Educational Issue? Blog Post

- Interactive Tree of Life
- Wish List? Tweet It

Spanish translations of a previously posted article

- “Especies Anillo: Demonstraciones Inusuales de Especiación” [Ring Species: Unusual Demonstrations of Speciation], by Darren E. Irwin, of the University of California, San Diego. Irwin illustrates how ring species provide a unique glimpse into how some species came to be. Read the article in English at <http://actionbioscience.org/evolution/irwin.html> or in Spanish at <http://actionbioscience.org/esp/evolution/irwin.html>.

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

Public Policy Report for 31 August 2009

- **National Science Foundation announces new ethics rules.** On 20 August 2009, the National Science Foundation announced plans for implementation of Section 7009 of the America COMPETES Act.
- **Five-year plan for US Geological Survey Climate Wildlife Science Center released.** Plans for the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center continue to take shape. The center was established at the US Geological Survey in 2008.
- **National Science Foundation accepting comments on environmental impacts of the National Ecological Observatory Network.** The National Science Foundation has requested public comment on its preliminary environmental assessment of the National Ecological Observatory Network.
- **NOAA asks the public to help shape its future.** NOAA is seeking public input for the develop-

ment of its “Next Generation Strategic Plan,” a blueprint for how NOAA will meet the needs of the nation and the world in coming decades.

- **Funding available for ocean exploration.** NOAA has announced the availability of \$3 million for grants for study of unknown or poorly known lake and ocean regions.

Public Policy Report for 17 August 2009

- **Nationwide event has biologists meeting with members of Congress.** Scientists and educators from across the country participated in the first Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits Week from 17–21 August.
- **Energy Department announces new stimulus funds for scientific research.** The US Department of Energy announced more than \$237 million in new funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for scientific research, infrastructure, and instrumentation projects.
- **White House sets priorities for federal science investments in fiscal year 2011 budget.** In a memo, the White House informed heads of all federal agencies to “build upon the science and technology priorities already reflected in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.”
- **Senate confirms science nominees for State, National Institutes of Health, and Fish and Wildlife Service.** Before leaving Washington for the August recess, the Senate confirmed dozens of nominees for posts throughout the Obama administration.
- **Creationist exams approved in United Kingdom.** Evolution education in the United Kingdom sustained a blow when a government agency approved a creationist curriculum for use by Christian schools throughout the United Kingdom.