

AIBSnews

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AIBS *news*

JUNE 2010/VOLUME 60 NUMBER 6

AIBS Policy Director Testifies before House Committee

On 25 March, AIBS Director of Public Policy Robert Gropp testified before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies about the president's fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget request for the US Geological Survey (USGS). Gropp appeared before the panel in his capacity as cochair of the USGS Coalition.

During his remarks, Gropp thanked current and former subcommittee members for their efforts to increase funding of the USGS. His statement stressed that the USGS is more than the science agency for the Department of the Interior; it is an internationally respected natural resource science agency and should be treated similarly to other federal science agencies in the federal budgeting and appropriations process. Additionally, the research and related products generated by USGS personnel save money, protect lives, create new economic and employment opportunities, and promote informed environmental stewardship.

Gropp expressed concern that the administration's budget request for FY 2011 does not fund fixed (uncontrollable) cost hikes, such as increases in office rent, utilities, salaries, and similar expenses. Although the administration proposed funding growth of \$21.6 million for the USGS, when \$13.5 million for unfunded fixed costs are factored into the budget, the increase is only \$8.1 million, which would be allocated to important new initiatives. However, an additional \$11 million would be cut from USGS programs in the Water Resources Discipline, Biological Resources Discipline, and Enterprise Infrastructure accounts.

AIBS was a founding member of the USGS Coalition, which was established

to encourage federal investment in the unique combination of biological, geological, hydrological, and geographical programs of the USGS.

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

- I see that AIBS is advertising its DC office for rent, what's up?
- The AIBS I know

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original articles in English

- **"Does Light Pollution Affect Living Things?"** In this article, Travis Longcore, of the University of Southern California, and Catherine Rich, of the Urban Wildlands Group, demonstrate how light pollution is influencing basic biological processes and interactions. Read the article at www.actionbioscience.org/environment/longcore_rich.html.
- **"Extreme Environments: Microbes in Ice"** In this article, Jody Deming, of the University of Washington, Seattle, is interviewed about the extreme environments of high Arctic sea ice, where microorganisms have adapted to survive and flourish. Read the article at www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/deming.html.

Spanish translations of previously posted articles

- **"El Futuro de los Recursos Pesqueros Marinos"** [The Future of Marine Fish Resources], by J. Emmett Duffy, of the Virginia

Institute of Marine Science. Duffy asks us to address a potential catastrophe by reducing overfishing, destructive fishing practices, and pollution. Read the article in Spanish at www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/duffy.html and in English at www.actionbioscience.org/biodiversity/duffy.html.

- **"Alfabetismo Científico en el Aula Escolar"** [Scientific Literacy in the Classroom], by Carol Brewer, of the University of Montana. Brewer encourages educators to foster scientific literacy, which empowers students to understand the basic concepts presented in the media and civic policy, improve critical-thinking skills, and make connections to the natural world. Read the article in Spanish at www.actionbioscience.org/esp/education/brewer.html and in English at www.actionbioscience.org/education/brewer.html.

Recent "Technology: An Educational Issue?" blog posts

This blog about issues in educational technology discusses ways to learn



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Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

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

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and teach the biological sciences using technology. Visit <http://teachissues.blogspot.com/>. Recent posts and discussions include:

- Internet bird collection
- GEON mentors
- High-tech nature/science

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

Public Policy Report for 12 April 2010

- **House science committee formulates America COMPETES reauthorization.** The House Committee on Science and Technology is making headway on a reauthorization of the America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act. On 25 March, the Energy and Environment Subcommittee marked up several provisions that address energy research. Included is language that would increase the funding authorization for the Department of Energy Office of Science to \$8.154 billion in fiscal year 2015.
- **NPS finalizes policy to require benefits-sharing agreement for research.** The National Park Service (NPS) has finalized a policy that requires researchers using specimens collected from national parks to enter into a benefits-sharing agreement with the NPS if their research produces discoveries or inventions with a commercial application. Under the new rule, researchers with commercially successful discoveries would provide monetary or nonmonetary compensation, such as scientific equipment or lab work, to the national park on an annual basis, subject to the terms of their benefits sharing agreement.

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- **PhD Candidates engage in interdisciplinary research.** According to a new report from the National Science Foundation, about a quarter of PhD candidates conduct interdisciplinary research. This proportion has remained relatively stable over the last decade at approximately 28 percent. The report is based upon self-reported data from new PhD recipients collected by the Survey of Earned Doctorates.
- **FWS seeks comments on permits for migratory birds.** The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requests public comments regarding the agency's application and reporting requirements for the take of migratory birds. Several USFWS permits regulating the disturbance and taking of migratory birds are scheduled for government review this year.

Public Policy Report for 29 March 2010

- **Obama picks Nobel laureate for OSTP science post.** On 22 March, President Obama selected Carl Wieman to be associate director of science at the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Wieman, who was among the recipients of the 2001 Nobel Prize in physics, is currently on the faculty at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver and the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has been a proponent of science education reform, including serving as the founding chair of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Science Education. If confirmed by the Senate, Wieman would lead the Science Division of OSTP, which formulates and coordinates federal research and development policy, as well as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education policy.
- **Help influence FY 2011 science funding: Write Congress today.** Through the AIBS Legislative

Action Center, you can send letters to your congressional representatives requesting their support for increased funding for the National Science Foundation and the US Geological Survey in fiscal year 2011. Letters from constituents at this time will help remind members of Congress that their constituents care about funding for these agencies.

- **NSF, DOE, USDA joint initiative to improve climate impact predictions.** The National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Energy, and Department of Agriculture plan to fund \$250 million of climate modeling research over the next five years. The goal of this effort is to improve predictions of localized impacts of climate change. The Decadal and Regional Climate Prediction Using Earth System Models program is designed to generate more powerful models to help decisionmakers develop regional climate adaptation strategies. The program aims to improve climate predictions by modeling at smaller geographic scales and over shorter time frames than was previously possible. Currently, most climate-modeling capacity is at the continental scale. "People live in regions, not on the global mean," said NSF Director Arden Bement.

- **New report examines causes of gender gap in science.** A new report from the American Association of University Women, *Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*, examines the social and environmental causes underlying the underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. In the last several decades, girls have been catching up to boys in terms of elementary, middle, and high school science and engineering courses taken, and nearly the same number of girls as boys graduate from high school prepared to study science or engineering in college. Yet research findings indicate that stereotypes, college environments, implicit bias, and popular beliefs about intelligence still contribute to the gender imbalance in science and engineering.

- **House passes bills on ocean education, Mississippi River water quality.** The House of Representatives passed two pieces of water-related legislation on 19 March. If enacted, the Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Program and National Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act (HR 3644) would authorize an annual 10 percent increase in funding over the next five years for the ocean education program administered by NOAA (the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). The B-WET program currently supports environmental education programs in six coastal regions: California, Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, New England, and Pacific Northwest. The House also passed legislation (HR 3671) that would direct the US Geological Survey to monitor nutrient and sediment loads in the upper Mississippi River basin.

- **NSF letter-writing campaign a success.** An impressive number of scientists and educators recently dedicated a couple of minutes each to send a letter to their representatives about funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fiscal year (FY) 2011. These efforts, coordinated by the AIBS Legislative Action Center, helped to produce results: Seventy representatives signed a "Dear Colleague" letter to Chairman Molohan and Ranking Member Wolf of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Science, and Justice. This display of support for \$7.424 billion in funding for the NSF in FY 2011 is a promising sign for sustaining the federal investment in NSF-sponsored research. To see the complete list of representatives who signed the Dear Colleague letter, please visit <http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=14843506>.