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AIBS*news*

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Biology in the Federal Science Enterprise: NSF BIO April Advisory Committee Meeting

On 17 April, AIBS Executive Director Richard O'Grady and AIBS Public Policy Director Robert Gropp joined staff from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) to speak at the spring meeting of the Advisory Committee for the Biology Directorate of the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The agenda and slides from the meeting are online at *www.nsf.gov/events*. James Collins, NSF assistant director for biological sciences, spoke about the Biotechnology Industry Organization's fiscal year 2009 funding priorities for "Life in Transition" studies. He also spoke about the new study that the NSF commissioned from the National Research Council, "The Role of Theory in Advancing 21st-Century Biology: Catalyzing Transformative Research." Collins met with the AIBS Board of Directors in May.

Staff from AIBS, AAAS, and FASEB then spoke about "biology in the federal science enterprise" with respect to the following three points:

- How does your organization describe and represent the biological sciences/biology with respect to science policy and budget?
- What are your metrics for determining the effectiveness of "science on the Hill" and other similar activities for Congress with respect to science policy and budget?
- Will your organization provide science policy advice for the transition to a new administration? To the next Congress? If so, will your efforts be targeted to a particular group or groups within the new administration or Congress, and will they emphasize any specific area or areas of science?

The talks went very well and discussions continue. In coming decades, the public and decisionmakers will demand that scientists provide answers to questions of great societal importance. Informed responses to global environmental change, sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, nanotechnology, biometrics, artificial intelligence, public health threats, and food security and quality, among many other issues, will require a coordinated and prioritized response from the research community. Currently, however, few individual scientists are prepared to provide this response. As a result, few scholarly or professional organizations are positioned to appropriately inform a collective response.

In order for the biological sciences to advance, a new, efficient, and coordinated transdisciplinary community will be required. Biologists need to employ new technical skills and theoretical frameworks that build upon and surpass traditional taxonomic and integrative approaches. More important, biologists from various subfields must be prepared to work collaboratively with each other and with scientists from other fields, members of the media, policymakers, and science educators. A cultural shift within the scientific community's traditional organizations and new models for supporting research are required.

AIBS Honors Outstanding Contributions to the Biological Sciences

AIBS is pleased to announce the recipients of the following awards for 2008:

- **Distinguished Scientist Award:** Terry L. Yates, University of New Mexico (awarded posthumously)
- **Outstanding Service Award:** David E. Blockstein, National Council for Science and the Environment
- **Education Award:** Eric Klopfer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **President's Citation Award:** Ira Flatow, National Public Radios's *Talk of the Nation: Science Friday*
- **Past-President's Award:** Douglas J. Futuyma, State University of New York at Stony Brook
- **Media Award:** Michelle Nijhuis, *High Country News*

I N S I D E

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Recent Articles Online at *www.actionbioscience.org*

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at *www.aibs.org*

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The awards were presented on 12 May at the AIBS annual meeting, "Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases."

AIBS President Rita Colwell and Executive Director Richard O'Grady said in a joint statement: "We are pleased to honor these dedicated and talented individuals. From a variety of backgrounds, they have all made significant positive contributions to the field of biology."

Below are descriptions of the award winners.

Terry L. Yates was posthumously given the Distinguished Scientist Award, presented to individuals who have made significant scientific contributions to the biological sciences. At the time of his death in December 2007, Yates was vice president for research and economic development at the University of New Mexico (UNM), as well as curator of genomic resources for UNM's Museum of Southwestern Biology. From 2004 to 2007, he served as president of the Natural Science Collections Alliance, where he worked tirelessly on the national stage to increase awareness of the vitally important research in biological diversity, evolution, and ecology that is conducted at US natural science collections and museums. Yates was best known for his groundbreaking research that isolated the source of hantavirus, the serious respiratory disease that began afflicting people in the American Southwest in 1993. He was a member of the Board of Life Sciences of the National Academy of Sciences and an honorary member of the Society of Mammalogists, the highest honor bestowed by the organization. Yates's wife, Nancy, accepted the award on his behalf.

David E. Blockstein received the Outstanding Service Award, presented in recognition of noteworthy service to the biological sciences. Blockstein is a senior scientist with the National Council for Science and the Environment, which he joined in 1990 as founding executive director. He is also vice president and acting secretary-treasurer of the US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development, as well as executive secretary to the Council of Environmental Deans and Directors. Blockstein's writing, mentoring, and organizational talents have bolstered environmental science policy, improving the linkage between science and decisionmaking on environmental issues, and increased the representation of minorities in the sciences. Blockstein is founding chair of the Ornithological Council, an association that provides scientific information about birds to policymakers, and is involved in ongoing efforts to conserve the critically endangered Grenada dove and the Grenada hook-billed kite.

Eric Klopfer received the Education Award, presented to an individual (or group) who has made significant contributions to education in the biological sciences, at any level of formal or informal education. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Klopfer is the Scheller Career Development Professor of Science Education and Educational Technology and director of the Scheller Teacher Education Program (STEP). STEP prepares MIT undergraduates to become math and science teachers, and under Klopfer's leadership, the program has developed an extensive network of K–12 teachers to enhance its efforts. His innovative research focuses on the development and use of computer games and simulations for building understanding of science and complex systems. He cofounded Education Arcade, a group that is advancing the use of games as learning tools in the classroom. In recognition of his ideas and energy dedicated to transforming science education, Klopfer was elected to the Santa Fe Institute's Science Board, the recognized authority in New Mexico on K–12 education.

Ira Flatow received the President's Citation Award, which recognizes meritorious accomplishments by an individual (or group) in the biological sciences. Flatow is a veteran science correspondent and award-winning TV journalist. For more than 35 years, he has been reporting and hosting lively, informative discussions on science, technology, health, space, and the environment. Flatow currently hosts National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation: Science Friday.* As a former NPR science correspondent, Flatow reported from Cape Canaveral, Three Mile Island, and the South Pole. His TV credits include six

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years as host and writer for the Public Broadcast Systems's Emmy-award-winning *Newton's Apple,* and science reporter for *CBS This Morning* and CNBC. He has talked science on *Today, Charlie Rose,* and *Oprah.* He is the author of several books, most recently *Present at the Future: From Evolution to Nanotechnology,* and *Candid and Controversial Conversations on Science and Nature.*

Douglas J. Futuyma received the Past-President's Award, which recognizes the services of the immediate past-president of AIBS. Futuyma is a distinguished professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolution at the State University of New York Stony Brook, where his research interests focus primarily on speciation and the evolution of ecological interactions among species. Before his term as president of AIBS, Futuyma served as president of the Society for the Study of Evolution and the American Society of Naturalists. He was a Guggenheim and a Fulbright Fellow, and is a member of the National Academy of Sciences. Futuyma is an editor of *Evolution* and the *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics,* as well as the author of two successful textbooks, *Evolutionary Biology* and *Evolution.* His leadership and service to AIBS go back more than a decade, with numerous board and committee appointments to cross-disciplinary projects, including the BioOne online journals initiative, the National Ecological Observatory Network, the Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science, and the Year of Science 2009.

Michelle Nijhuis received the Media Award for her articles "Beetle Warfare" and "Bonfire of the Superweeds," part of a series on western invasions that ran in *High Country News* on 20 August and 26 November 2007. She is a contributing editor of *High Country News.* Her reporting on science and the environment has also appeared in *Smithsonian, National Geographic, Audubon,* and the anthology *Best American Science Writing.* Nijhuis has won several national honors for her science writing, including the Science Journalism Award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

AIBS Members Visit Congress

Nearly 40 scientists and graduate students were in Washington, DC, in April to participate in the annual congressional visits event cosponsored by the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition (BESC) and the Coalition on Funding Agricultural Research Missions (Co FARM). The two-day event began with a briefing by senior members of the science policy community. Following the briefing, event participants attended a BESC/CoFARM Capitol Hill reception at which Representatives Brian Baird (D–WA) and Brian Bilbray (R–CA) were recognized for their support of biological and agricultural research.

Congressman Baird brings a unique perspective to the House of Representatives as a PhD clinical psychologist who practiced in Washington and Oregon and taught at the university level before his election to Congress. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Research and Science Education of the Science and Technology Committee, Baird has strongly championed investments in all sciences, and defended the integrity of the scientific method and the peer-review grant-making process. Chairman Baird played important roles in the effort to pass the America COMPETES Act, which was signed into law by President Bush last year.

Representative Bilbray led a successful effort supporting inclusion of the biological sciences, social sciences, and interdisciplinary research in legislation reauthorizing the National Science Foundation (NSF). Additionally, Bilbray was centrally involved with an effort to include the biological and social sciences in a report that accompanied the NSF Authorization Act of 2007. Representative Bilbray serves on the House Science and Technology Committee, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"Through their actions, Chairman Baird and Representative Bilbray have demonstrated that they understand the best investment for the nation is one that funds all fields of scientific research," said Robert Gropp, cochair of BESC and AIBS director of public policy. "Answering the grand scientific questions and global challenges we must address in the coming decades requires a comprehensive approach—no one discipline will inform our actions."

Participating in this year's congressional visits were the 2008 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leader Award (EPPLA) recipients, Cheryl Logan and Caroline Ridley. EPPLA Honorable Mention recipients Allison Leidner and Yiwei Wang also participated, as did three former EPPLA recipients. In addition, the Organization of Biological Field Stations—an AIBS member organization and participant-level contributor to the Public Policy Office—also sent four participants.

Participants in this year's congressional visits event met with approximately 60 different congressional offices.

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

- Biology in the Federal Science Enterprise: NSF BIO AC April Meeting
- Scientific Habits of Mind and Bunk Detectors

Recent Education Reports Online at *www.aibs.org*

- 2008 AIBS Meeting on Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases
- House Members Consider Diversity in STEM Education
- HHMI Awards $60 Million to Invigorate Science Teaching at Liberal Arts Colleges
- April Marks 25th Anniversary of *A Nation at Risk*
- Professional Development Helps Connect Science Centers and Schools
- Technology Counts 2008
- 2007 *Digest of Education Statistics* Released
- FREE Web Site Provides Education Resources for Science

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- Emc^2 Election Multimedia Contest for Cash
- Peace Corps Calls for Experienced Educators
- Upcoming Conferences and Events

Recent Articles Online at *www.actionbioscience.org*

Original interviews

- "Mitochondria and Aging," with Douglas C. Wallace, director of the Center for Molecular and Mitochondrial Medicine and Genetics, University of California at Irvine
- "The Evolution of Emerging Viruses," with Eddie Holmes, professor of biology at the Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics at Pennsylvania State University
- "Scientific Literacy in the Classroom," with Carol Brewer, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and biology professor at University of Montana, Missoula

Original articles in English

- "The Global Decline of Mollusks," by Christine E. Parent, PhD student in biology at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada
- "Ten Ways to Green Your Home and Lifestyle," by Nancy H. Taylor, environmental journalist, author, and lecturer from Jackson County, Wyoming.

Original lessons to accompany articles

- "Save Our Amphibians," to accompany the article "Why Do We Need an Amphibian Ark?" by Kevin Zippel
- "Going Green," to accompany the article "Ten Ways to Green Your Home and Lifestyle," by Nancy H. Taylor

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at *www.aibs.org*

Public Policy Report for 9 May 2008

- European report outlines future of taxonomy
- Range expansion: Threats to science education spread
- Employment opportunity: AIBS Public Affairs Associate
- Mikulski includes $200 million for the NSF in supplemental appropriations
- Court rules for polar bears
- EPA committee seeks candidates for committee
- New in *BioScience:* "Big Bucks for Biosecurity Research—But Who's Doing What?"
- Now in the AIBS Bookstore: AIBS *110th Congress Directory* and *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*
- From the *Federal Register*

Public Policy Report for 28 April 2008

- AIBS supports amendment to protect federal research budgets
- Rejected: Creationists lose bid to offer education degree in Texas
- AIBS testimony supports EPA research funding
- Evolution threats persist in Louisiana
- Fisheries Society issues evolution statement
- Unemployment rate drops for most scientists, slight increase for environmental life scientists and social scientists
- Survey of EPA scientists finds political interference
- Soil scientists seek input on research priorities
- Now in the AIBS Bookstore: AIBS *110th Congress Directory* and *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*
- Register now for the 2008 AIBS Annual Meeting: "Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases"
- From the *Federal Register*

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