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IN THIS ISSUE

ESA IN DC

- ESA Joins 2,500 Organizations Urging End to Sequestration
- ESA Selects New Class of Science Policy Fellows

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES AND NEWS

- Senate and House Pass Continuing Resolution
- House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Holds Hearing on NEON Management
- House Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing on Agricultural Research Programs

FEDERAL AGENCY AND ADMINISTRATION UPDATES AND NEWS

- NSF Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education Releases 10-Year Report
- NIAID Holds September Advisory Council Meeting
- Agencies Announce Food Waste Reduction Goal

ESA IN DC

ESA Joins 2,500 Organizations Urging End to Sequestration

On September 10, a group of more than 2,500 national, state, and local organizations, including ESA, sent a letter to Congress urging lawmakers to replace sequestration with a balanced approach to deficit reduction. The letter notes that nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs, including science, education, and job training, among others, have been cut too much already as part of efforts to reduce the deficit. It also recommends that any relief from sequestration be equally balanced between NDD and defense programs.

To accompany the letter, organizers also held a press conference featuring Reps. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), and Barbara Lee (D-CA) to highlight the issue. In
addition, individuals and groups interested in supporting this effort can access a “Raise the Caps” Toolkit, which includes sample tweets, op-eds, and blog posts.

Sources and Additional Information:

- The September 10 letter signed by ESA can be viewed at http://static1.squarespace.com/static/55c4b954e4b0f8108c9b0d0423/t/55f0d014e4b03583c0bc9c5e/1441845268413/NDDSignOnFall2015FinalWithSignatures.pdf.
- The “Raise the Caps” Toolkit is available at http://www.nddunited.org/action.

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**ESA Selects New Class of Science Policy Fellows**

In September 2015, the Science Policy Capability Committee (SPCC) of the Entomological Society of America (ESA) concluded the review of a competitive application process to select the 2015 cohort of ESA Science Policy Fellows. The purpose of the program is to develop scientists to serve as effective advocates for entomology and entomological research.

The ESA Science Policy program launched with the 2014 inaugural class of Science Policy Fellows. The Fellows engaged in hands-on education events designed to teach them the basics and nuances of federal science funding, science advocacy, as well as to provide opportunities to meet with lawmakers and federal agency leaders both in Washington D.C. and in their home districts.

The 2015 class of Fellows will begin their training at the ESA Annual Meeting, November 15-18 in Minneapolis, MN and have their first trip as Science Policy Fellows to Washington DC in May, 2016. The 2015 Cohort of Science Policy Fellows includes the following ESA members:

- **Dr. Kamal J.K. Gandhi**, Associate Professor at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources and an Adjunct Associate Professor from the Department of Entomology, the University of Georgia.
- **Dr. Clare C. Rittschof**, Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Illinois and Pennsylvania State University. Rittschof will be appointed as an Assistant Professor of Integrative Arthropod Biology in the Department of Entomology at the University of Kentucky in January 2016.
- **Dr. Thomas E. Anderson**, recently retired as the Global Insecticide R&D Group Leader for FMC Corporation in Ewing, NJ. Anderson now serves as an industry consultant and the owner of Entoniche Consulting, LLC, in Clayton, NC.
- **Ms. Johanna Elsensohn**, a PhD student at North Carolina State University with a major in entomology and minors in Genetic Engineering and Society, and Biotechnology. Elsensohn is an NSF IGERT fellow in Genetic Pest Management.
- **Dr. Helen Spafford**, Associate Professor in the Department of Plant and Environment Protection Sciences at the University of Hawaii, Manoa.
CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES AND NEWS

Congress Passes Continuing Resolution to Fund Government

After returning from August recess, Congress had a limited number of days to pass legislation to fund the government for fiscal year (FY) 2016, which begins on October 1. Frustrating these efforts was a small contingent of Republican conservatives that threatened a government shutdown over a Continuing Resolution (CR) that included (continued) federal funding at the FY 15 levels for Planned Parenthood. However, the far right lost their leverage when Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) announced his resignation from Congress. Boehner’s decision to leave Congress, effective October 30th, politically freed him to advance the stop-gap measure for a vote. House Moderate Republicans were able to join with House Democrats in passing a CR that will continue to fund the federal government at FY 15 levels for the next 11 weeks. This stop-gap measure provides the necessary time for both parties to work on an agreement for the remainder of FY 2016.

Sources and Additional Information:

- For more details on legislative activity, visit http://www.house.gov/.

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Holds Hearing on NEON Management

On Friday, September 18, 2015, the Subcommittee on Research and Technology and the Subcommittee on Oversight of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a joint hearing entitled “NEON Warning Signs: Examining the Management of the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON).” The purpose of this hearing was to investigate the causes of the NEON project’s cost and schedule overruns, and to assess NSF’s proposed plans to rectify the defects that led to the project’s apparent mismanagement.

NEON, which is a continental-scale observation platform that uses sensors to gather ecological data, is currently $80 million over budget and 18 months behind schedule. Subcommittee Members focused most of their questioning on NEON’s management practices and NSF’s contract oversight, blaming both the agency and the contractor for NEON’s ballooning costs and schedule delays. NSF has proposed to de-scope the project while imposing strict reform requirements on NEON. Witnesses stated that NEON has until December 2015 to take corrective action to mitigate the possibility of future overruns, otherwise NSF would consider another contractor.
Sources and Additional Information:

- More information on the hearing, including an archived webcast and links to witness testimony, is available at https://science.house.gov/legislation/hearings/subcommittee-research-and-technology-and-subcommittee-oversight-hearing-neon.

House Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing on Agricultural Research Programs

On September 29, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture and Research held a public hearing to “highlight research innovations achieved by our nation’s greatest agricultural colleges and universities.” This is the third hearing in a series to examine and emphasize recent innovations in agricultural sciences. Witnesses included: Dr. Robert J. Hauser, Dean of the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Dr. James W. Moyer, Associate Dean for Research, College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, Washington State University; Dr. Mindy Brashears, Director of the International Center for Food Industry Excellence, TexasTech University; Dr. Michael Heithaus, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Florida International University; Dr. Michael P. Lacy, Professor and Department Head, Department of Poultry Science, University of Georgia; Dr. Douglas D. Buhler, Senior Associate Dean for Research, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University. Collectively, the testimonies highlighted the mix of federal funding that supports agricultural research, including U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grants, formula funding, and the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants. In addition, the researchers highlighted critical issues impacting food security and stability, such as invasive pests. Chairman of the full Agriculture Committee Michael Conaway (R-) and Chairman Subcommittee Rodney Davis (R-IL) emphasized the need to prioritize agricultural research to meet the growing demands of the Nation and sustain innovation.

Sources and Additional Information:


FEDERAL AGENCY AND ADMINISTRATION UPDATES AND NEWS

NSF Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education Releases 10-Year Report

The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education (AC-ERE) has released a 10-year outlook report titled “America’s Future: Environmental Research and Education for a Thriving Century.” The report reiterates the importance of environmental sciences and interdisciplinary approaches to solving environmental
challenges. The AC-ERE believes NSF is “uniquely poised to establish the broad, systems-level approaches needed to understand complex socio-environmental systems at multiple scales and across multiple disciplines” and encourages the Foundation to build cross-directorate activities to address complicated socio-environmental problems. The report encourages NSF to build upon core and special programs, including the Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems (INFEWS); risk and resilience initiatives; and the Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems to continue to build a cross-Foundational environmental portfolio.

Sources and Additional Information:


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**NIAID Holds September Advisory Council Meeting**

On September 21, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) held its fall advisory council meeting to discuss the institute’s research portfolio. NIAID Director Tony Fauci also described recent activities by the Institute’s leadership and provided legislative and budget updates.

In his Director’s report, Dr. Fauci summarized the President’s fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget request for NIH and noted that the proposed funding increases for NIAID would be designated by the Administration for special initiatives, such as those focused on antimicrobial resistance and precision medicine. He also announced NIAID’s FY 2016 interim financial management plan, which will take a conservative approach to spending until FY 2016 appropriations are finalized by Congress. In FY 2016, NIAID estimates the institute will fund R01s in the 10th percentile for established investigators and in the 14th percentile for new investigators.

Regarding vector-borne diseases, Dr. Fauci mentioned that NIAID Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Director Carole Heilman recently briefed Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ) on NIAID’s Lyme disease research portfolio. Dr. Fauci also highlighted a June 2015 interdisciplinary workshop supported by NIAID in partnership with the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization to discuss chikungunya. The three-day workshop facilitated a review of the epidemiology and pathogenesis of chikungunya, an assessment of risk, and the identification of critical knowledge gaps.

Sources and Additional Information:

- The report from the chikungunya conference, *Gaps and Opportunities in Chikungunya Research: Expert Consultation on Chikungunya Disease in the Americas*, is available at
Agencies Announce Food Waste Reduction Goal

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched the U.S. Food Waste Challenge, a platform to facilitate the international exchange of information and best practices on limiting food loss and waste to improve food security. This month, EPA and USDA, in partnership with food retailers, charitable organizations, the agriculture industry, and local governments, announced a national goal to reduce food waste levels 50 percent by 2030. Reducing food waste has far-reaching implications: addressing food insecurity, reduces solid municipal waste levels, and decreases methane emissions and pollution. This new goal is part of federal agency-wide efforts to address sustainability. These topics will likely be addressed during the United Nations General Assembly meeting on sustainable development later this month.

Sources and Additional Information:

- More information about this initiative is available at http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/.