



Science Policy News

Entomological Society of America Science Policy News

October 5, 2016

ESA IN DC

- *ESA Washington Office Hosts Science Policy Session at ESA Annual Meeting, Participates in Grand Challenges Summit*
- *Bipartisan Support for Science on Display at Golden Goose Awards*

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES AND NEWS

- *Congress Averts Shutdown, Passes Short-term Funding Bill*

FEDERAL AGENCY AND ADMINISTRATION UPDATES AND NEWS

- *Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Proposed for U.S. Endangered Species Status*
 - *Open Letter on Climate Change to the National Academy of Science*
 - *White House Publishes National Strategy for Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology Products*
 - *USDA APHIS Regulation Revision on Transporting Plant Pests*
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ESA IN DC

ESA Washington Office Hosts Science Policy Session at ESA Annual Meeting, Participates in Grand Challenges Summit

Representatives from ESA's Washington, DC-based government relations firm, Lewis-Burke Associates, greatly enjoyed attending and participating in the Society's 64th Annual Meeting on September 25-30 in Orlando, Florida, along with nearly 6,700 delegates from 102 countries. The annual meeting was hosted in conjunction with the XXV International Congress of Entomology (ICE) as well as the International Entomology Leadership Summit: Improving the Human Condition through Insect Science.

Lewis-Burke representatives presented a federal forecast to the ESA Governing Board as well as to the Science Policy Committee. Lewis-Burke also hosted a Science Policy Fellows Workshop which was attended by the third cohort of ESA science policy fellows. During the workshop the fellows were exposed to the essentials of how policy is made in DC, how ESA contributes to this process, and a session with entomologists currently working in or with agencies in Washington, DC, such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Lewis-Burke representatives were pleased to meet the newest ESA fellows as well as many other ESA members and are grateful to those who attended and participated in these sessions.

Lewis-Burke also participated in the Leadership Summit, providing a perspective talk on how and why entomologists should consider engaging in national and international policymaking regarding efforts to address the grand challenges currently faced by society. They also facilitated a workshop on “Influencing National and International Public Policy” during which various groups discussed ways the entomology community could continue to make progress on internationally mobilizing entomologists and helping elevate the field by engaging across a wide range of policymaking stakeholders. The responses from the workshop were subsequently shared with the rest of the summit attendees in a reporting section.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the Society’s policy efforts, be sure to check out the suite of advocacy tools Lewis-Burke has put together for ESA members to use. These documents, which include Frequently Asked Questions about science policy advocacy, talking points and communication tips, a guide to congressional meetings, and a template for scheduling a congressional meeting, are all available online at <http://entsoc.org/sci-pol/science-policy-communications-documents>.

Golden Goose Award

On September 22, 2016, the Golden Goose Awards held its third annual ceremony in recognition of the importance of federally-funded scientific research. The award is a reference to the Golden Fleece Awards created by the late Senator William Proxmire (D-WI), who used this event to draw attention to “wasteful” government-financed research. The awards arrive at an important time of economic constraints coupled with congressional scrutiny of federally-funded scientific research.

The Golden Goose Awards featured opening remarks from Congressmen Jim Cooper (D-TN), Robert Dold (R-IL), Randy Hultgren (R-IL), and others. Notably, two of the recipients were recognized for their research in the field of entomology. The first award was related to the translation of how honey bee colonies assign foragers to novel flower patches into an algorithm used to efficiently allocate computer server resources. The second award was for research into the sex habits of the screwworm, ultimately leading to their controlled sterilization and a massive economic benefit to American ranchers.

Sources and Additional Information:

- More information on the Golden Goose Awards and additional details on this year’s awardees can be found at <http://www.goldengooseaward.org/>.
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CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES AND NEWS

Congress Averts Shutdown, Passes Short-term Funding Bill

On September 28, Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) to fund government operations through December 9. With only two days to spare before the end of the fiscal year and a government shutdown, the bill passed with rare bipartisan support, with a Senate vote of 72-26 and a House vote of 342-85. The CR funds almost all federal agencies and associated programs and projects at fiscal year (FY) 2016 levels and prohibits federal agencies from starting new programs, projects or activities. Funding

decisions and awards that require FY 2017 funding will be delayed. The CR also includes \$1.1 billion to respond to the Zika virus. These funds would primarily be directed towards the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to study the long-term health impacts of birth defects caused by the virus and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to advance a potential vaccine through Phase II clinical trials.

Congress has until December 9 to pass the remaining 11 appropriations bills, pass another CR, or pass an omnibus bill—a large catch-all spending bill for FY 2017. Since there is little support for passing an omnibus bill by Members of the House, including the current Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan (R-WI), a more likely alternative may be passing a few bills at a time, called minibuses, which may include three or four spending bills. If Congress does not pass these bills by December 9, it can pass another CR until the end of the year or into next year to allow time for more negotiations. Two significant factors that will impact the likelihood of completing appropriations bills by the end of the year are the outcome of the Presidential elections and the party in control of the Senate next year. Some Members of Congress may want to push funding decisions until next year if they feel the election outcomes will improve their negotiating positions.

FEDERAL AGENCY AND ADMINISTRATION UPDATES AND NEWS

Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Proposed for U.S. Endangered Species Status

On September 21, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed listing the rusty patched bumble bee as an endangered species, which would make it the first wild bee species to be formally listed as such. The rusty patched bumble bee, formerly found in abundance across the Midwest and Northeastern United States, is one of several species that has experienced significant population decline over the past 20 years. Wild bee species are responsible for the pollination of a variety of wild flowers as well as over a quarter of U.S. crops, with an estimated value of approximately \$3.5 billion each year. As the use of neonicotinoid pesticides for vector control becomes more widespread, debate regarding their effect on bee populations is likely to intensify. The rusty patched bumble bee is one of nearly 50 bee species in North America facing extinction according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The window for public comment will remain open until November 21, 2016, after which a final decision regarding their endangered status will be made.

Sources and Additional Information:

- More information on the listing of the rusty patched bumble bee is available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-bumblebee-idUSKCN11R2TI>.

Open Letter on Climate Change to the National Academy of Science

Earlier this month, 375 members of the National Academy of Science, including 30 Nobel Laureates, issued an open letter outlining concerns related to climate change. Specifically, the letter details the overwhelming scientific consensus surrounding anthropogenic climate change and the risks associated with not implementing key sections of the Paris Accord. This landmark global agreement, of which the

U.S. is party to, was signed earlier this year and includes commitments from other major carbon emitters like China and India.

Sources and Additional Information:

- The letter can be viewed at <http://responsiblescientists.org/>.
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White House Publishes National Strategy for Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology

Earlier this month, the National Science and Technology Council's (NSTC) Emerging Technologies Interagency Policy Coordination Committee published their *National Strategy for Modernizing the Regulatory System for Biotechnology Products*, a document that promotes transparency, efficiency, and public engagement in the regulation of biotechnology products. The federal agencies currently regulating these technologies include the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but uncertainty over agency jurisdiction and the duration of review windows has led to unnecessary costs and administrative burden for the academic community.

This strategic document was created in response to a 2015 memorandum issued by the Executive Office of the President (EOP) directing these agencies to update the current regulatory framework, develop a strategy to ensure this framework is capable of responding to potential risks, and conduct an in-depth analysis of the future of biotechnology; this strategy is intended to fulfill the second objective and the National Academies have been commissioned to satisfy the third. Updated regulations in this space could have future implications for the entomological sciences as genetically modified insects become a more plausible avenue for stemming the spread of vector-borne diseases.

Sources and Additional Information:

- The press release announcing the publication of this report is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/09/16/building-30-years-experience-prepare-future-biotechnology>.
 - The full report is available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/biotech_national_strategy_final.pdf.
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USDA APHIS Regulation Revision on Transporting Plant Pests

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is slated to publish a set of regulatory updates in the coming weeks regarding the transportation of invasive plant species deemed to be low risk across state borders. Following publication there will be a 60-day comment period, which may be extended to 90 days, during which the public may provide comments and feedback. ESA leadership has been engaged with APHIS and will submit a formal response on behalf of the community after review the regulatory changes.