



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**AIBS PRESIDENT-ELECT TO RECEIVE 2006 NATIONAL MEDAL OF SCIENCE
Dr. Rita Colwell will be honored for pioneering work in biological research**

WASHINGTON, DC – On Friday, July 27, 2007, President George W. Bush will present Dr. Rita Colwell, President-Elect of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, with the 2006 National Medal of Science. The award is the nation's highest honor for scientists.

Dr. Colwell is currently a Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland at College Park and at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and Senior Advisor for Canon US Life Sciences, Inc.

The National Medal of Science recognizes the outstanding contribution Dr. Colwell has made to the fields of molecular biology and microbiology of the aquatic environment. Dr. Colwell has been at the forefront of research on the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*, the water-borne pathogen responsible for deadly outbreaks of cholera in the developing world. Her research efforts have led to actions that significantly improved drinking water quality and reduced the number of deaths in affected regions of the world, including Bangladesh and India.

Locally, Dr. Colwell and her laboratory are examining the distribution and ecological interactions among bacteria, viruses, and plankton in the Chesapeake Bay. She is currently developing an international network to address emerging infectious diseases and water issues, including safe drinking water for both the developed and developing world.

“What a well-deserved and prestigious honor for a real leader in the biological sciences research community,” said Dr. Kent Holsinger, AIBS Past-President and Professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Connecticut. “Dr. Colwell’s work has both improved our fundamental understanding of basic biological systems and provided innovative solutions to serious public health challenges.”

From 1998-2004, Dr. Colwell served as the 11th Director of the National Science Foundation. During her tenure at NSF, she led efforts to improve K-12 science and mathematics education, graduate science and engineering education and increase the participation of women and minorities in science and engineering.

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Dr. Colwell has held many advisory positions in the U.S. Government, nonprofit science policy organizations, and private foundations, as well as in the international scientific research community. She is a nationally-respected scientist and educator, and has authored or co-authored 16 books and more than 700 scientific publications. She produced the award-winning film, *Invisible Seas*, and has served on editorial boards of numerous scientific journals. She is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and received the Order of the Rising Sun award from the Emperor of Japan.

In 2008, Dr. Colwell will serve as President of AIBS. Additionally, she is the Program Chair of the 2008 AIBS Annual Meeting, "Climate, Environment, and Infectious Disease" to be held in Washington, D.C. May 12-13, 2008.

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About AIBS:

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) scientific association dedicated to advancing biological research and education for the welfare of society. Founded in 1947 as a part of the National Academy of Sciences, AIBS became an independent, member-governed organization in the 1950s. Today, with headquarters in Washington, DC, and a staff of approximately 50, AIBS is sustained by a robust membership of some 5,000 biologists and 200 professional societies and scientific organizations; the combined individual membership of the latter exceeds 250,000. AIBS advances its mission through coalition activities in research, education, and public policy; publishing the peer-reviewed journal *BioScience* and the education website ActionBioscience.org; providing scientific peer review and advisory services to government agencies and other clients; convening meetings; and managing scientific programs. Website: www.aibs.org.