

## 2019 Public Policy Office Annual Report





## Welcome

The American Institute of Biological Sciences promotes the increased understanding and appreciation of life. Through our public policy initiatives, we engage with policymakers to promote decisions that are responsive to the needs of the biological sciences community. We simultaneously share policy analysis and insights with the scientific community to help them understand and influence actions that shape research and education.

Biodiversity loss, the biological dimensions of climate change, threats to public health, food security and availability – the scope of the challenges facing society are immense. Responsible public policy promoting investments in biological research and education enable the new discoveries and the development of the skilled workforce required to solve these problems while simultaneously promoting economic growth through the expansion of the bioeconomy.

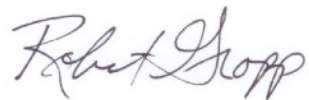
In 2019, AIBS led efforts that provided a foundation for new investments, particularly in biodiversity-related and biodiversity-enabled research. Through the Biodiversity Collections Network, we launched the Extended Specimen Network – a community-informed initiative that provides a framework for stimulating new research and education in the coming decade. We fought to secure new funding for federal science programs at the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and Department of the Interior. Our efforts also helped secure an increase to the federal budget caps that would have limited funding for scientific research in fiscal year 2021 and beyond.

Our efforts are not limited to advocacy for funding. We continue to call on the White House and federal agencies to use open and transparent processes for reviewing and revising federal regulations and rules. AIBS shared concerns and recommendations with the Department of State to help inform its efforts to

negotiate international treaties that can influence the conduct of biological research.

In 2019, AIBS sustained its commitment to early career scientists by recognizing graduate student leaders with the Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award. We also provided scientists – from early career to senior scientists and program leaders – with science policy and communications training. Programs that we will continue to offer in 2020 as we work to further increase the capacity of the biological sciences community to inform and shape public opinion and policy.

As you will read in the following pages, AIBS continues to work with our members and other partner organizations to advocate for biology. We invite any individual or organization that values scientific research and science-informed decision-making to join with us as we continue to promote an increased understanding and appreciation of biology.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Robert Gropp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Gropp" clearly distinguishable.

Robert Gropp, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## Key Accomplishments in 2019

- ✓ Called on the Office of Science and Technology Policy to coordinate a government-wide initiative to build the Extended Specimen Network.
- ✓ Expressed support for the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program.
- ✓ Helped 167 scientists become advocates for science.
- ✓ Facilitated 127 meetings between scientists and policymakers.
- ✓ Urged lawmakers to pass appropriations and end a partial government shutdown.
- ✓ Provided Congressional Testimony calling for increased federal investments in science.
- ✓ Helped increase spending caps on discretionary spending and secure suspension of budget sequestration.
- ✓ Recognized for advocacy on behalf of scientific collections with an award.
- ✓ Worked with the community to oppose a rule narrowing the definition of the "Waters of the United States."
- ✓ Endorsed legislation to improve scientific educational infrastructure in rural schools.
- ✓ Supported legislation safeguarding federally funded research from growing threats from foreign interference, cyberattacks, theft, and espionage.
- ✓ Urged the Administration to consider a wide range of stakeholder perspectives as well as impacts on collaborative science when developing policies and procedures that address foreign influence on research.
- ✓ Opposed devastating budget cuts to the University of Alaska system.
- ✓ Opposed Administration's policy restricting funding for research using human fetal tissue.
- ✓ Expressed opposition to and urged congressional scrutiny of a proposed rule by the Environmental Protection Agency to limit the use of scientific studies in the regulatory rulemaking process.

## **Science Policy**

AIBS made significant contributions to research and science education policy in 2019. Our efforts concentrated on promoting federal investments in biological research and education, advocating for the responsible use of science in the policymaking process, and advancing the policy interests of biodiversity-enabled and biodiversity-related research and education.

### ***Research Funding***

AIBS advocated for increased federal investments in science. Biological research and science education funding were the focus of two AIBS advocacy events. In testimony to Congress, AIBS called for new investments in the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Environmental Protection Agency. In collaboration with other scientific organizations, AIBS secured bipartisan congressional support to raise federal budget caps on discretionary spending for two-years – an action needed to ensure that science funding was not slashed.

### ***Science in Policymaking***

In 2019, AIBS provided timely input to the White House on the U.S. Bioeconomy and responded to a congressional request for information on climate change. Additionally, AIBS opposed a proposal to limit the number of wetlands and waterways receiving federal protections under the Clean Water Act; opposed a new policy restricting funding for research using human fetal tissue; raised concerns about the Department of Agriculture's decision to relocate the National Institute of Food and Agriculture outside the national capital region; opposed the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rule barring the use of scientific studies in formulating regulations unless the underlying data are publicly available; and expressed concerns about a potential Executive Order requiring publishers to immediately make federally funded scientific research openly accessible. AIBS will continue to actively monitor these and other situations and to alert the scientific community on how to weigh in.

At the state-level, AIBS expressed opposition to large budget cuts to the University of Alaska system proposed by the Alaska Governor. The Alaska state legislature and governor eventually enacted a budget with significantly smaller budget reductions.



## ***Biodiversity and Collections***

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN), which is supported by a grant to AIBS, released a new report, Extending U.S. Biodiversity Collections to Promote Research and Education, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC in April 2019. The report outlined a national agenda that leverages digital data in biodiversity collections for new uses and called for building an Extended Specimen Network. BCoN includes more than 35 organizations that are supportive of its mission.



*BCoN report release event at the National Press Club.*

The 2019 meeting of the AIBS Council of Member Societies and Organizations, Beyond Specimens, explored different initiatives with the goal of identifying areas where biology-serving organizations can unite to advance new scientific frontiers. The meeting identified opportunities for community collaboration and advocacy to advance biodiversity -related and -enabled science.

AIBS's advocacy on behalf of scientific collections was recognized by a Special Service Award from the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) in 2019. AIBS shared the award with the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

## ***Other Highlights***

The Association of Ecosystem Research Centers has worked with AIBS for many years to plan a science briefing for congressional policymakers in conjunction

with their annual meeting. The topic of the 2019 briefing was “Coastal Ecosystems and People,” which explored the complex interfaces between coastal processes and hazard and natural and built environments.

## Outreach and Training

### *Meetings with Lawmakers*

AIBS offers scientists opportunities to meet with their elected officials in Washington, DC, and in their home state.

More than 220 scientists, including graduate students, senior researchers, and educators, from 28 states registered to participate in the 11th Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. This grassroots advocacy event encourages scientists across the nation to showcase for federal and state lawmakers the people, facilities, and equipment required to conduct scientific research. In addition to helping schedule district meetings for participants, AIBS policy staff also provided online training to prepare participants for the meetings. The event was made possible by AIBS, with support from event sponsors American Society of Plant Taxonomists, Botanical Society of America, Helminthological Society of Washington, Natural Science Collections Alliance, Organization of Biological Field Stations, Paleontological Society, Society for Freshwater Science, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, and Society for the Study of Evolution, and event supporter: Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology.



*Left: Representative Filemon Vela (D-TX) visits Texas A&M University Kingsville's cattle fever tick research site. Right: Representative Jim Costa (D-CA) tours research facilities at the California State University in Fresno, CA.*

AIBS organized a Congressional Visits Day in April, where biologists from across the nation traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with their federal lawmakers. The scientists also participated in a supplemental two-day science communications and advocacy training program to prepare for their meetings. AIBS facilitated congressional meetings for the participants with House and Senate offices to discuss funding for biological research programs.



*Senators Barrasso (R-WY) and Enzi (R-WY) and Representative Cheney (R-WY) meet with a graduate student.*

### Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits Sponsors



Society for Freshwater Science



SPNHC  
ADVANCING COLLECTIONS CARE

#### Supporter





## **Notable Meetings Facilitated by AIBS in 2019**

- Congressional Visits Day participants met with Senators John Barrasso (R-WY), Mike Enzi (R-WY), Rob Portman (R-OH), Tim Scott (R-SC), and John Boozman (R-AR) and Representatives Elizabeth Cheney (R-WY), Scott Tipton (R-CO), Raul Ruiz (D-CA), Mark Takano (R-CA), Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH), Don Young (R-AK), and Jody Hice (R-GA) about funding for biological research.
- Representative Jim Costa (D-CA) received a tour of research facilities at the California State University in Fresno, CA.
- Representative Filemon Vela (D-TX) visited Texas A&M University Kingsville's cattle fever tick research site.
- Representative Joseph Morelle (D-NY) visited the University of Rochester and learned about various graduate research projects.
- Representative Judy Chu's (D-CA) District Director participated in a tour of the Robert J. Bernard Field Station organized by faculty at the Claremont Colleges in California.
- Representative Joyce Beatty's (D-OH) staff met with faculty, students, and staff at the C. Wayne Ellett Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic at the Ohio State University.
- In total, 85 meetings were facilitated by AIBS in 2019.

## ***Policy and Communications Training for Scientists***

AIBS offered eight science communications and policy training workshops in 2019 that trained 167 scientists and graduate students. Our current course offerings include a science communications boot camp, an online course to improve writing skills, and a boot camp on enabling interdisciplinary and team science. These programs are offered in Washington, DC and around the country on university campuses and at scientific meetings.

## ***Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award***

AIBS recognized graduate students in the biological sciences for their achievements in science policy. The Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award was presented to Barbara Del Castello, who is a doctoral student in genetics at the University of Georgia, and Brian Lovett, who is a doctoral candidate in

entomology at the University of Maryland (UMD), College Park. The 2019 award winners each received an expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, to participate in an AIBS science communications training program and meetings with their congressional delegation, and a one-year AIBS membership.



*Left to Right: AIBS President Dr. Charles Fenster, EPPLA honorable mention recipient Amrita Banerjee, EPPLA winner Brian Lovett, AIBS Executive Director Dr. Robert Gropp, EPPLA winner Barbara Del Castello, and EPPLA honorable mention recipient Alexandra Chirakos.*

## Help Support Student Opportunities

AIBS would like to provide more education and training opportunities to biology students. We particularly want to expand our highly successful Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award program to ensure that more early career professionals may benefit from the program in the future. In 2019, AIBS reached more than half way to its goal of raising \$75,000. To fully fund the program, we need the support of our members and friends. Please consider donating to AIBS to help us ensure more biology graduate students have an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need to develop careers that allow them to successfully work at the nexus of science and public policy.

Please make a tax-deductible donation today by visiting  
<https://memberplanet.com/campaign/aibs/eppladonation>.

## ***AIBS Legislative Action Center***

Grassroots activists use the AIBS Legislative Action Center to advocate for science policy. In 2019, researchers wrote to their members of Congress to ask for increased funding for the biological sciences. The center also offers summaries of legislation of interest to the biological sciences community and other resources for researchers to engage in the development of the nation's science policy.

The Legislative Action Center is made possible by financial contributions from the Society for the Study of Evolution and the Botanical Society of America.

## ***Publications and Information Dissemination***

AIBS policy staff report on science policy developments through several outlets, including the AIBS Public Policy Report and the Washington Watch column in the AIBS journal *BioScience*. Start your free subscription at <https://www.aibs.org/mailling-lists/>.

## ***Photo Contest***

The Faces of Biology Photo Contest, sponsored by AIBS, continues to draw strong participation from members of the biological sciences community. The contest encourages researchers, educators, and students to showcase biological research in its many forms and settings. The photos are used to help the public and policymakers better understand the value of biological research and education.

The winners of the 2019 contest included photos depicting a graduate student assessing the insect biodiversity of restored versus natural streams across North Carolina, an explosive breeding aggregation of gliding tree frogs in Costa Rica, and the discovery of a new shrimp species during the underwater exploration of a cave in Belize. The first-place winner will be featured on the cover of an upcoming issue of *BioScience* and received \$250.





*Photo contest first place winner Michelle Jewell.*

**Photo Credits** (unless otherwise noted): Claire Lewis, Jyotsna Pandey, National Press Club, Representative Filemon Vela's office, Joseph Ross, Rhiannon Jakopak, and James Verdier.



## Get Involved

### ***If you have a minute...***

- Join the AIBS Legislative Action Center ([policy.aibs.org](http://policy.aibs.org))
- Subscribe to the Public Policy Report ([www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports))
- Follow us on Twitter (@AIBS\_policy)

### ***If you have 15 minutes...***

- Read an AIBS position statement on research funding, scientific integrity, climate change, and more ([www.aibs.org/position-statements](http://www.aibs.org/position-statements))
- Delve into science policy by reading an editorial, Feature article, or a Washington Watch column from *BioScience* ([www.aibs.org/washington-watch](http://www.aibs.org/washington-watch))
- Support science advocacy through a small donation to AIBS ([www.memberplanet.com/campaign/aibs/donate](http://www.memberplanet.com/campaign/aibs/donate))

### ***If you have 30 minutes...***

- Learn about federal investments in science and the budget process ([www.aibs.org/public-policy/science\\_funding.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/science_funding.html))
- Listen to a *BioScience* Talks podcast exploring a timely science topic ([bioscienceaibs.libsyn.com](http://bioscienceaibs.libsyn.com))

### ***If you have a day...***

- Participate in the AIBS Congressional Visits Day in Washington, DC ([www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional\\_visits\\_day.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_visits_day.html))
- Participate in the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event ([www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional\\_district\\_visits.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html))
- Coordinate a professional development workshop ([www.aibs.org/events/professional\\_development.html](http://www.aibs.org/events/professional_development.html))

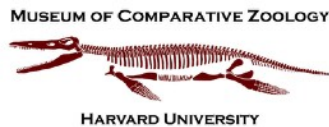
### ***Student Opportunities***

- Apply for the Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award ([www.aibs.org/public-policy/student\\_opportunities.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html))



## Supporting Organizations

The following organizations sponsored one or more science policy, professional development, or Council Meeting during 2019.



## How to Contribute

Financial support from individuals and organizations makes it possible for AIBS to serve the biological sciences community and to help advance a common agenda. Consider making a contribution to AIBS. Please visit <https://www.memberplanet.com/campaign/aibs/donate> to make a secure online donation.



## About AIBS

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is the national scientific organization dedicated to advancing the biological sciences to promote an increased understanding of all life. Our mission is to promote the use of scientific information to inform decision making and advance biology for the benefit of science and society.

AIBS initiatives are unified by a commitment to promoting informed decision-making. Our strategic priorities include:

- **Publications and Communications** including reliable reports, analyses, and the peer-reviewed journal *BioScience*, which is a forum for integrating the life sciences and educating the public about biological sciences.
- **Scientific Peer Review and Program Management Services** for research proposals and programs sponsored by funding organizations, including the federal government, state agencies, private research foundations, and other non-government organizations, and to educate the community about the science of peer review.
- **Community Programs** that advance the field and profession of biology while promoting and providing leadership, with a particular emphasis on public policy and advocacy, education and professional development, as well as public awareness of science.

AIBS works with any stakeholder that advances the broad field and profession of biology. Organizations partner with us on initiatives, work with us to identify and communicate matters of common concern, and help connect us to their communities for idea and information exchange – particularly regarding public policy, education, public understanding of science, and matters of professional concern.

AIBS has member societies and organizations that support our work financially. AIBS has clients from government agencies to biological societies and other nonprofits that use our expert services for a fee.

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