



# Science Policy News

Entomological Society of America Science Policy News

**MARCH 2017**

## **ESA's Science Policy Platform**

The Entomological Society of America (ESA) is a non-partisan scientific organization. We represent a broad spectrum of opinions united under one principle: the promotion and advancement of scientific inquiry, discovery, and communication. A key component of our mission is to enable our members to share their science globally. We join coalitions of scientific societies to further our mission; employ policy specialists to assist in our decision-making; provide accurate scientific input to lawmakers, agency leaders, and other community stakeholders; and develop and support programming to educate scientists about the importance of scientific advocacy. A recent *Entomology Today* [blog post](#) outlined our science policy program. If you have questions, comments, or concerns about ESA's science policy platform, [please send us your feedback](#).

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## **ESA IN DC**

### ***ESA Endorses March for Science, Promotes Grassroots Engagement***

On February 21, ESA officially endorsed the non-partisan March for Science, a grassroots-organized event in Washington, DC, on April 22. "We have an obligation to promote the responsible conduct of science and speak out against any proposed interference with the free exchange of scientific knowledge," said ESA President Susan J. Weller, Ph.D., in a press release issued that same day.

Other organizations that have endorsed the event include the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, the Center for Biological Diversity, and many others.

ESA is currently in the process of determining how it can best provide support to members during the event itself in Washington, DC, and remotely for members at marches taking place elsewhere.

Critical to the success of the March for Science will be the communication of why science is important for policymakers *after* the march is over. Prior to the March, ESA will host a webinar that will include information on advocacy best practices members can use in meetings with their elected officials at home and in Washington. Watch the ESA eNews and this newsletter for the webinar date and time. ESA has also provided members with scripts for use in communicating with their Members of Congress on pressing issues related to entomology.

#### *Sources and Additional Information:*

- ESA's press release officially endorsing the event can be found at <http://entsoc.org/entomological-society-america-supports-march-science>.
- More information about the March for Science, along with a full list of partnering organizations, can be found at <https://www.marchforscience.com/>.
- ESA's Advocacy Scripts can be found at <http://entsoc.org/sci-pol/advocacy-scripts>.

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### ***ESA Shares Science Policy Priorities***

On February 23, the ESA Science Policy Priorities tiered agenda was shared with the ESA membership through the Society's website. These priorities were identified based on feedback via a late-2016 survey of the ESA membership, existing advocacy priorities relevant to Congressional priorities, and approval by the ESA Science Policy Committee and Governing Board. The tiered agenda reflects which topics are of highest priority and thus ones on which ESA will engage most actively, those with which the Society is engaged but not actively advocating, and those which are being monitored but are of lower priority. This strategy is designed to prioritize ESA advocacy on Capitol Hill and with federal agencies and to guide the urgency with which ESA will respond to other issues as they arise. ESA's highest priority topics are:

- Scientific integrity
- Invasive insect species
- Pollinator health

- Public health (Vector-borne diseases)
- Climate change
- Science communication

*Sources and Additional Information:*

- The full tiered agenda is available at <http://www.entsoc.org/policy-initiatives/science-policy-program/esa-science-policy-priorities>.
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### ***ESA Sends Contingent to CDC Foundation Zika Summit***

On February 27-28, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the CDC Foundation hosted a summit in Atlanta focused on vector control strategies for diseases transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The summit featured plenary addresses and reports from research regarding public perceptions of the Zika problem. Discussions touched on a range of issues including public health imperatives, methods for measuring entomological impact, challenges to implementing effective studies, novel mosquito control tools, and an exploration of novel management tools including *Wolbachia* and genetic modification techniques. In addition to many other ESA members in the audience, the Society was formally represented by ESA President Susan Weller; Vice President-Elect Bob Peterson; Certification Board Chair-Elect Chelle Hartzler, BCE; MUVE Section President-Elect Mustapha Debboun, BCE; Past President Grayson Brown; and Director of Strategic Initiatives Chris Stelzig.

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### ***ESA Signs AFRI Coalition Letter Supporting Robust Funding Levels in 2018 Farm Bill***

On February 21, ESA signed on to a letter with members of the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Coalition addressing leadership on the House and Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees, urging robust funding levels in the 2018 Farm Bill. The letter requests that Members oppose new policies that call for additional funding cuts and notes that the last farm bill was projected to contribute \$23 billion in deficit reduction over 10 years. The agriculture industry makes substantial contributions to the American economy, yet farm income has declined by 46 percent in just the past three years. The Coalition recognizes the constrained budget environment but urges the Committees to consider the value of American agriculture and the detrimental effects of underfunding key programs as they move forward with the 2018 Farm Bill.

*Sources and Additional Information:*

- The full letter to committee leadership is available at <http://www.entsoc.org/sites/default/files/files/Science-Policy/AFRI-Coalition-Budget-Letter-2017.pdf>.
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## CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES AND NEWS

### ***Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Holds Hearing on the Endangered Species Act***

On February 15, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing to address the modernization of the *Endangered Species Act*. Witnesses included David Freudenthal, former governor of Wyoming; Gordon Myers, president of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission; James Holte, president of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation; Jamie Rappaport Clark, president and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife; and Daniel Ashe, president and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. They testified to the critical role of the *Endangered Species Act* in preserving U.S. natural resources and threatened animal species. The general tone was that, despite problems or inefficiencies, the law has been effective in rescuing a variety of species from the brink of extinction and is too valuable to be repealed.

Members of the Committee, however, cited inefficiencies in the delisting process that impede job creation and economic development, priorities for the new Administration. Once endangered species have recovered, they often remain on the endangered species list, which affects farming, housing development, energy, and industrial practices. In her opening statement, Clark, former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Clinton Administration, argued that, in the past two years, the more than 130 proposed bills and riders to modernize the legislation have been attempts to weaken or undermine the law. Furthermore, Clark stated that modernization in this context has become a euphemism for reduced government oversight and the promotion of unfettered land use.

Members of the Committee seemed to agree with witnesses that the purpose at the heart of the bill should be preserved, but the disconnect comes in the process of implementation. The Committee noted that increased autonomy at the state level would reduce the red tape that stymies economic development while certain witnesses proposed increased federal funding as the best option to smooth existing inefficiencies. It remains unclear how the *Endangered Species Act* will fare in the new Administration, which has made job creation a top priority, but it may be an opportunity for the Society to offer its expertise regarding the effect of the legislation on insect species and the implication these changes could have on the economy. The ESA Science Policy Committee has convened a writing committee to update and redraft the Society's outdated (circa 2000) position statement on the *Endangered Species Act*.

#### *Sources and Additional Information:*

- A full webcast of the hearing is available at <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=72694EEF-F5BB-40CC-A382-1E8B6F7CA28C>.

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### ***Scientific Integrity Act Introduced in Senate***

On February 7, Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) introduced the *Scientific Integrity Act* to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. The legislation, which has 29 Democratic co-sponsors, is intended to "protect scientific integrity in Federal research and policymaking," stating that legislative decisions at the federal level should be informed by independent, non-

partisan scientific research. The bill also addresses the issue of public communication, following a decision by the Trump Administration to freeze public communications from federal agencies, a decision that, though routine in the transition to a new Administration, sparked contentious public debate due to its broad scope.

The bill also calls for the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to consult with leadership from Federal agencies that fund scientific research to establish a set of principles ensuring the free flow of information and research and preventing the distortion—intentional or otherwise—of scientific data. Also included are lists of policies, procedures, and requirements that further expand upon these principles. It is unlikely, however, that the *Scientific Integrity Act* will continue through the legislative process without any Republican co-sponsors. Democrats have been critical of the Administration's position on certain areas of scientific research, most notably climate science, in its early weeks as Trump has yet to appoint a Science Adviser or install leadership at OSTP. However, with Republican control of both the House and Senate, efforts to address these issues will see little success without bipartisan support.

*Sources and Additional Information:*

- The full text of the *Scientific Integrity Act* is available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/338/text>.

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## **FEDERAL AGENCY AND ADMINISTRATION UPDATES AND NEWS**

### ***AAAS Alliance to Expand Access to High-Quality Scientific Publishing***

On February 14, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to expand public access to research funded by the Foundation and content published in AAAS *Science* journals. The Association cites this partnership as a natural expansion of its mission to "foster education in science and technology for everyone." As a result, those funded by the Gates Foundation will now be able to publish their research in *Science*, *Science Translational Medicine*, *Science Signaling*, *Science Advances*, *Science Immunology*, and *Science Robotics* under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license.

As part of the effort to increase public access to scientific research, every grant awarded by the Gates Foundation contains an open access policy. Additionally, the Foundation recently invested in Chronos, a publishing service that directs grantees to open access journals. Bill Moran, publisher of *Science*, and Leigh Morgan, Chief Operating Officer for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, released a joint statement regarding open access to scientific research: "The robust exchange of scientific information will play a crucial role in solving the big challenges of the 21st century, from the spread of infectious disease to climate shocks and food security. All of us involved—producers of scientific knowledge as well as funders, publishers, and researchers—have a stake in ensuring the continued integrity of global scientific exchange." The recent policy changes for both the Gates Foundation and AAAS are effective January 1, 2017.

*Sources and Additional Information:*

- More information about this partnership is available at <https://www.aaas.org/news/aaas-alliance-expand-access-high-quality-scientific-publishing>.
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### ***NIH Makes Progress in Vector-Borne Disease Vaccination Studies***

On February 21, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced two new advances in the agency's efforts to stop the spread of vector-borne diseases. NIH has launched a Phase 1 clinical trial at the NIH Clinical Center, testing a vaccine called AGS-v that targets mosquito saliva and is intended to provide protection against a broad range of diseases, including Zika, malaria, West Nile, and dengue fever. The trial will evaluate the safety of the vaccine and its ability to elicit an immune response. PfSPZ, a second vaccine to protect against malaria, has just concluded its Phase 1 clinical trial. The trial demonstrated the safety and efficacy of the vaccine against the one strain of malaria that was used to create it. However, in five of the six subjects, it also demonstrated the ability to protect against a different strain of the malaria parasite. This is significant because any meaningful malaria vaccine would need to protect against the variety of strains of malaria endemic to the region in which they live.

#### *Sources and Additional Information:*

- More information about the AGS-v vaccine is available at <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-begins-study-vaccine-protect-against-mosquito-borne-diseases>.
  - More information about the PfSPZ vaccine is available at <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/experimental-pfspz-malaria-vaccine-provides-durable-protection-against-multiple-strains-nih-clinical-trial>.
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### ***Regulation Freeze Blocks Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*) from Joining Endangered Species List***

The rusty patched bumble bee, which was slated to join the endangered species list in early February, will be delayed until at least March 21 following the Trump Administration's 60-day freeze on new regulations. The rusty patched bumble bee has seen significant population decline over the past two decades and would have been the first bee species to be added to the endangered species list. In a recent hearing of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, witnesses expressed concern that the *Endangered Species Act* could be repealed or its scope significantly diminished under the new Administration, which could be detrimental to threatened or endangered species (see full article above). It is unclear if this process will continue as usual once the regulation freeze ends, but interested ESA members should remain engaged for potential advocacy opportunities.

#### *Sources and Additional Information:*

- More information about the rusty patched bumble bee and the regulation freeze is available at <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/sifter/trump-freeze-blocks-bee-joining-endangered-species-list>.
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