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Science Policy News

News from the intersection of entomology and public policy

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ESA in DC

ESA Selects Class of 2022 Science Policy Fellows

In September, the ESA Science Policy Committee confirmed the final slate of individuals selected for the ESA [Science Policy Fellows Class of 2022](#).

The new Fellows will receive their first round of training at the [2022 Joint Annual Meeting](#) of the Entomological Societies of America, Canada, and British Columbia, November 13-16, in Vancouver and serve through November 2024. The 2022 Fellows are:



- **Corey Day** (pictured top left), a Ph.D. student in entomology and plant pathology at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville, researches the spatial epidemiology of La Crosse virus disease and the ecology of its vectors.
- **Kelsey E. Fisher, Ph.D.** (top middle), a postdoctoral research associate at Iowa State University, studies monarch butterfly and pollinator conservation in agroecosystems with an emphasis on movement ecology.
- **Sarah Gunter, Ph.D.** (top right), an assistant professor at the Baylor College of Medicine, is an epidemiologist with a research focus on developing geospatial and molecular tools to better fight vector-borne disease of human importance in the United States and Central America.
- **Dowen Jocson** (bottom left), a Ph.D. candidate in entomology at Washington State University, studies vibrational communication in insects and insect pests to develop better IPM strategies.

- **Hannah E. Quellhorst** (bottom right), a Ph.D. candidate in entomology at Kansas State University, studies the behavior, ecology, and insect–microbe interactions of invasive stored products pests to help improve IPM programs, ultimately leading to increased biosecurity and food security.

ESA Co-Hosts Grand Challenges Event on Invasive Species

ESA, on behalf of the Grand Challenges Agenda for Entomology, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), on behalf of the Continental Dialogue on Non-Native Forest Insects and Diseases, hosted an in-person workshop on September 20 at the Society of American Foresters 2022 convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

The daylong, pre-conference workshop, titled "Protecting Trees and Forests from Invasive Pests through Collaborative Solutions," [brought together stakeholders](#) from federal agencies, industry, other trade associations, and the academic community to talk about current and future strategies to detect pests trafficked via solid wood packaging material and ornamental plants. The day ended with a series of talks from the academic community about threats and opportunities to domestic forests, as well as the research enterprise. The day was filled with lively debate and interesting data and provided a great opportunity to connect in person after several years of virtual conversations for many of the participants.

ESA and TNC both thank everyone who joined the workshop. In December 2021, ESA and TNC partnered on a [series of webinars](#), and both organizations are planning future efforts to continue driving discussion and collaboration in this area of work.

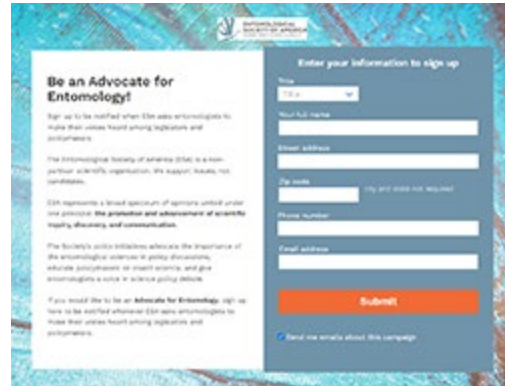
ESA Encourages Entomologists to Vote in November

Midterm elections generally have lower rates of turnout than presidential-election years, and studies suggest scientists vote at [lower rates](#) than other academic peers. Voting is the civic responsibility of all eligible citizens. Voter [registration deadlines](#) have already begun. If you are eligible to vote, ESA encourages you to check if you are still [registered](#) in your state, to [register](#) if you aren't, and read up on the candidates up and down [the ballot](#) to make an informed decision about who best reflects your views and the needs of your community.

Advocate for Entomology!

Sign Up for ESA Action Alerts

Be an advocate for entomology! In 2022, ESA is issuing new issue-specific advocacy alerts, enabling ESA members to easily connect with legislators and offer timely subject-matter expertise. [Sign up now to receive ESA science-policy action alerts.](#)

A screenshot of a web form titled "Be an Advocate for Entomology". The form is set against a background of a blue and green map. On the left, there is introductory text about the Entomological Society of America (ESA) and its mission. On the right, there is a sign-up section titled "Enter your information to sign up" with fields for "First name", "Last name", "Email address", "City", "Phone number", and "Email address". A "Submit" button is at the bottom right. A checkbox at the bottom left is labeled "Send me emails about this campaign" and is checked.

Or, act now to contact your legislators through one of our three current Action Alerts:

- [Help Pass the PREVENT Pandemics Act](#)
- [Tell Congress About the Threat of Invasive Species](#)
- [Encourage Congress to Help Save Coffee and Promote IPM](#)

Congressional Updates

House Agriculture Committee Hosts Farm Bill Hearing on Conservation

On September 20, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry hosted a [hearing](#) focused on programs in the Conservation title of the Farm Bill. This is one in an ongoing series of hearings hosted by the committee reviewing the outcomes of the 2018 Farm Bill to prepare to draft the 2023 bill.



The hearing witnesses consisted entirely of nonprofit and trade association representatives, without representation of scientists or research universities. Committee Ranking Member Glenn Thompson (R-PA) gave remarks at the opening of the hearing in which he criticized the \$3.5 billion in spending on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Climate-Smart Commodities Program launched in February as well as other conservation and climate spending passed in the *Inflation Reduction Act*. He did note that producers should be at the center of conservation conversations and that innovative solutions such as precision agriculture can be effective with bipartisan support.

Witnesses and members of the subcommittee mentioned the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) as one that does and could continue to make a large impact on reducing the financial burden of implementing conservation practices such as precision agriculture technology, soil health practices, and other measures.

Senate Approves Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol

On September 21, the Senate voted 69 to 27 for the United States to join the [Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol](#). The amendment, which phases down the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), potent greenhouse gases that are commonly utilized as refrigerants, was drafted in 2016 and has since been ratified by 137 nations. The Senate's approval of the amendment is especially noteworthy since it marks the first time the U.S. has joined an international climate treaty with the Senate's advice and consent in 30 years, when President George H.W. Bush signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Although Congress has already granted the Environmental Protection Agency authority to reduce 85 percent of the production and consumption of HFCs over 15 years under the *American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act*, bipartisan support for joining the treaty creates even more momentum behind the Biden administration's climate change agenda, which already received a boost after the *Inflation Reduction Act* was enacted in August. Bipartisan support for this legislation further strengthens U.S. credibility in the context of international climate change negotiations. The passage of the Kigali amendment is also a prime example of how collaboration between the U.S. federal government, industry leaders, and scientists can lead to significant policy change.

Federal Agency and Administration Updates

White House Announces New Climate and Science Leadership

In early September, President Biden [announced](#) that Gina McCarthy would step down from her role as national climate adviser and will be replaced by her former deputy, Ali Zaidi. Biden also appointed John Podesta as the senior adviser on clean energy innovation and implementation. In this role, he will oversee the interagency efforts to implement the climate and clean energy funding provided by the *Inflation Reduction Act*. As a longstanding Democratic thought leader, Podesta is likely to be an impactful figure in both domestic and international climate policy.

The Senate [confirmed](#) Arati Prabhakar on September 22 to serve as the director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy by a 56 to 40 vote. Additionally, Prabhakar thus serves as Biden's science adviser and as a member of the Cabinet. In this role, she will work closely with White House climate leadership as well as senior agency officials to implement the large policy changes across science agencies, including unprecedented funding for climate, clean energy, and semiconductor technology investments recently approved as a part of the *CHIPS and Science Act*, the *Inflation Reduction Act*, and the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.

White House Launches New Efforts to Boost the U.S. Bioeconomy

On September 12, the Biden administration took its most significant steps to date toward advancing the U.S. bioeconomy by announcing a new [executive order](#) and hosting an accompanying White House [summit](#) to launch a new National Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Initiative (NBBI). Through these efforts, the White House emphasized that biotechnology and biomanufacturing have the potential to make significant positive impacts in a wide range of areas including climate change, energy, and agriculture.

The NBBI aims to unite federal departments and agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in strengthening investments in research and development in key areas of biotechnology, as well as to increase domestic biomanufacturing production capacity at all scales. The initiative emphasizes the need for improved biological data sharing, regulatory frameworks, and evaluation metrics, as well as the importance of training and supporting a diverse, skilled workforce to advance the bioeconomy.

Among other actions, the executive order directs federal agencies and departments to evaluate and report on their current investments in biotechnology and biomanufacturing. The administration will then use these reports to shape future budget requests, which in turn could lead to new funding from Congress in fiscal year 2024 and beyond.

White House Releases National Strategy, Hosts Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

On September 28, the Biden administration convened a [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#) for the first time in more than 50 years. The conference served as a platform for the White House to [announce](#) \$8 billion in commitments in partnership with business, civic, academic, and philanthropic leaders as a part of its "call to action" to address

the challenges of widespread malnutrition, diet-related diseases, and access to healthy foods. In addition, the administration also used the conference to call attention to the recently released [National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#), which lays out priorities involving more than a dozen federal agencies.

Priorities highlighted in the strategy and by participants at the conference suggested that several topics are likely to be prioritized in the president's budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2024, which may have implications to the environmental research and higher education communities. Some of these items include:

- Research on the intersection of climate change, food security, nutrition, and health, including especially the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Climate Change and Health Initiative;
- Activities by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to address food waste and loss;
- Research to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of current USDA-funded programs to address food insecurity—and to determine where resources can be invested to maximize the impact of public funds;
- Plans to strengthen and diversify the nutrition workforce, including identifying USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) programs that could incorporate workforce development opportunities, in collaborations with Land-Grant Universities.

NSF BIO Directorate Hosts Fall Advisory Committee Meeting

On [September 13](#) and [14](#), the National Science Foundation (NSF) held its Fall Advisory Committee meeting for the Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO), the last one led by the current head of BIO, Joanne Tornow, Ph.D. As of October 1, the current deputy assistant director of BIO, Simon Malcomber, Ph.D., began serving as acting assistant director.

The meeting kicked off with an overview of the existing challenges and opportunities that BIO faces; at the forefront of this list is building a sustainable future through climate resilience and clean energy research. Another primary goal for the directorate is to build research capacity of new faculty in biology to broaden participation within the field and strengthen the research experiences of undergraduates.

EPA Launches New Environmental Justice and Civil Rights Office

On September 24, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the [establishment](#) of the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR), which will operate in EPA headquarters and regional offices to address environmental issues in underserved communities. This office is intended to elevate environmental justice (EJ) issues within the agency, taking on the functions of the former Office of Environmental Justice with political leadership at the assistant administrator level to be Senate-confirmed.

Among its responsibilities, the office will collaborate with local communities, provide grants and technical assistance, and work to incorporate environmental justice considerations into EPA programming. Most notably, the office will also spearhead the implementation of the \$3 billion environmental justice block grant program established in the *Inflation Reduction Act* and will ensure EPA programs, including those created by the *Inflation Reduction Act* and the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, align with the Biden administration's Justice40 Initiative.

We do not anticipate that the OEJECR will support research-focused programs; however, there may be further opportunities for universities to help build capacities of EJ-impacted communities to access funds or to partner with communities to implement work to address environmental inequities. [Learn more about the EPA Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights.](#)

Renee Wegrzyn Announced as Inaugural ARPA-H Director

President Biden [announced](#) plans to appoint Renee Wegrzyn, Ph.D., to serve as the inaugural director of the recently established Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). Wegrzyn previously served in the Biological Technologies Office at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) as a program manager, as well as at the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity. At DARPA, her work primarily concerned synthetic biology and gene editing to enhance biosecurity, to promote public health, and to support the domestic bioeconomy.

Wegrzyn is currently a vice president of business development at Ginkgo Bioworks, where she focuses on the use of synthetic biology through biomanufacturing, vaccine innovation, and biosurveillance to combat infectious diseases, including COVID-19. Biden expressed his confidence in Wegrzyn's ability to lead the agency as both an entrepreneur and a synthetic biologist to save lives, improve domestic supply chains, and ensure that the U.S. is positioned as a global leader in biotechnology. Once Wegrzyn is officially in place, ARPA-H will likely

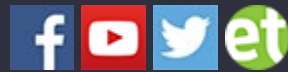
move forward with program manager recruitment and the development of funding opportunities.

Learn More About ESA Science Policy

ESA Science Policy Program Links

- [ESA Science Advocacy Priorities](#)
- [Position Statements](#)
- [Fact Sheets](#)
- [Science Policy Fellows Program](#)
- [Partnerships and Coalitions](#)
- [Advocacy Tools: Get Involved!](#)
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