



Ecological Society of America
1990 M Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

April 23, 2014

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science, and Related Agencies
1441 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science, and Related Agencies
124 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

As the world's largest organization of professional ecological scientists, the 10,000 member Ecological Society of America (ESA) urges you to include \$7.5 billion in funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the FY2015 Commerce, Justice, and Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Science, technology, and innovation have a crosscutting role to play in addressing the interconnected challenges of economic competitiveness and providing effective solutions to emerging problems such as disease, climate change, and food security.

The NSF is the only federal agency specifically responsible for supporting essential education and research across all science and engineering fields—a role that is vital to cultivating a workforce capable of keeping pace with global demand. Nearly one out of every four basic research projects at colleges and universities across the U.S. is supported by the NSF.

Biological Sciences Directorate

The NSF is the primary federal funding source for basic biological research at our nation's universities and colleges. The NSF provides approximately 66 percent of extramural federal support for non-medical, fundamental biological and environmental research at academic institutions.

The NSF Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) provides essential support for our nation's place-based biological research, such as field stations and natural science collections. A better understanding of life on Earth will help us to make new bio-based discoveries in the realms of food, fiber, fuel, pharmaceuticals, and bio-inspired innovation. It will also increase our understanding of how biological systems and functions respond to environmental changes.

A reduction of \$12.8 million is proposed for BIO in the FY 2015 budget. This is a considerably larger cut than is proposed for any other NSF research directorate. If enacted, the funding rate for biological and environmental research would drop by 18 percent from FY2014. Our request to you for NSF funding for \$7.5 billion in FY 2015 would allow for the BIO cuts to be restored.

STEM Education

The NSF plays a central role in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. A foundation and fundamental understanding of STEM is vitally important as we educate the next generation of leaders to compete in the global economy. The U.S. must produce one million more STEM professionals in the next decade to keep up with workforce needs in growing STEM fields.

The NSF proposes to increase both the number of new fellowships as well as the fellowship stipend in FY 2015. The Faculty Early Career Development program (CAREER) supports young faculty who are dedicated to integrating research with teaching and learning. ESA fully supports these proposed increases for FY 2015.

Conclusion

Continued investments in the biological sciences are critical. Sustained support for NSF at \$7.5 billion for FY 2015 will help spur economic growth and innovation, and continue to build scientific capacity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Katherine S. McCarter" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Executive Director
Ecological Society of America