

## Public Policy Committee Annual Report, 2019-2020

### BSA Public Policy Committee

Kal Tuominen (2020), *Co-Chair*

Krissa Skogen (2020), *Co-Chair*

Sandra Knapp (2020)

Ingrid Jordon-Thaden (2021)

Mary Sagatlova (2021), *Student Representative*

Tanisha Williams (2021), *Awards Chair*

Norm Ellstrand (2022)

Rachel Meyer (2022)

### Report Topics for 2019-2020

The joint committee of the BSA Public Policy Committee and ASPT Environmental and Public Policy Committee held meetings five meetings in October, November, January, April and June. Annotated agendas from each meeting are available on request.

The Joint Committee's work focused on four main areas in 2019-2020:

- I. Awards/Grants – Public Policy Award and Botanical Advocacy Leadership Grant
- II. *Plant Science Bulletin* content on public policy issues
- III. Tracking the status of legislation and policy activities of interest to BSA
- IV. Committee Organization & Goals - Advancing Year 1 of our 5-Year Plan: Formalizing the Mission, Structure and Assessing Performance

### I. Awards/Grants

#### Public Policy Award

The BSA Public Policy Award provides 2 recipients with funding to participate in the Biological Sciences Congressional Visits Day (CVD), which typically takes place in March or April annually. CVD is a two-day event hosted by the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition. The first day includes training provided by AIBS on science funding and how to effectively communicate with policy makers. Participants meet with their Congressional policy makers on the second day to advocate for federal support of scientific research.

The 2020 recipients of the BSA Public Policy Award were Taylor AuBuchon of the Danforth Plant Science Center and Mary Sagatlova of the Ohio State University.

Due to Covid-19, the 2020 Congressional Visits Day was postponed. AIBS is evaluating options for rescheduling 2020 Congressional Visits Day for a time this fall, which may include opportunities for participants to communicate with their members of Congress through the online AIBS Legislative Action Center and/or a "call-in" day – a coordinated event where participants call their members of Congress to express support for science. The Communications Boot Camp was offered as an online course or participants had the option to transfer their registration to AIBS' online Writing for Influence and Impact course.

#### *Future Work for 2020 - 2021*

- Increase the number of applications received

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- Coordinate application due date with ASPT

### Botanical Advocacy Leadership Grant

The Botanical Advocacy Leadership Grant is co-sponsored by both BSA and ASPT. The aim of the grant is to support local efforts that contribute to shaping public policy on issues relevant to plant sciences.

The 2020 recipient of the BAL Grant was Nina House (California Botanic Garden, formerly Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden) for her proposal “Assessing grazing impacts on remote montane meadows in the southern Sierra Nevada, Tulare County, California.”

The joint committee discussed ways to improve the messaging of award call and increase the number of applicants who apply. To this end, BAL Grant website was created to showcase past winners and their projects <https://cms.botany.org/home/awards/special-funds-and-awards/botany-advocacy-leadership-grant.html>

### *Future Work for 2020 - 2021*

- Change the name of the grant to better describe the goal/vision/intent
- Discuss and define the intent of the grant - to promote proposals that directly impacted a public policy issue as opposed to promoting science policy indirectly through broader education projects.
- Provide clearer language on the types of projects that could be funded
- Change the proposal due date to coincide with undergrad/grad student awards
- Increase the number of applications received

## **II. *Plant Science Bulletin* content on public policy issues**

The Public Policy Committee contributed three pieces to the *Plant Science Bulletin* on the activities of the PPC, with the goals of increasing visibility of the Committee’s activities and engaging the BSA membership policy items that are relevant to them.

- PSB Summer 2019 (65-2, p. 85-90): Public Policy Committee Report from Congressional Visits Day.
- PSB Fall 2019 (65-3, p. 144 - 145): Public Policy Committee Report Supporting Evidence-Based Policy Through Public Comments.
- PSB Spring 2020 (65-1): Workshops Advocate Traditional Ecological Knowledge at the Legislature in Guåhan

## **III. Tracking the status of legislation and policy activities of interest to BSA.**

- BSA endorsement of endorse a letter asking NSF to delay grant proposal deadlines and to provide automatic one-year no-cost extensions for grants terminating between March 1 and September 30, 2020.
- BSA endorsement of community letter to NIH expressing opposition to political interference with a funded research grant that was supporting research on coronavirus in bats, led by the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

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- BSA endorsement of reintroduced Botany Bill (H.R. 1572 and S. 2384)
- Decadal Vision review progress
- Changes to the Endangered Species Act (per webinar by AIBS)

### IV. Committee Organization & Goals

The Committee worked on formalizing our mission and structure to provide the framework for current work and the long-term sustainability of the committee.

#### *Future Work for 2020 - 2021*

- Coordinate with the presidents and boards of both BSA and ASPT to better align the work of the Committees with the goals and vision from both societies.
  - Coordination with BSA and ASPT leadership will provide better understanding of scope and expectations for performance going forward
    - Do we expand into other areas or focus our efforts on awards, PSB, and communicating w/ leadership on legislation and policy activities that are relevant to both societies?
  - Key challenge remains a combination of undefined scope and limited capacity to effectively advance many goals in concert, including how to act on rapid-response issues