



Ecological Society of America

1990 M Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

January 13, 2014

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Chairman
Senate Homeland Security and
Government Affairs Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Coburn
Ranking Member
Senate Homeland Security and
Government Affairs Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Coburn:

On behalf of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), the world's largest professional society of ecologists, I write to convey the importance of continued federal participation in scientific conferences.

Amid existing federal spending constraints where research and development investment has declined, we appreciate the desire to ensure federal dollars are spent judiciously. We agree that it is important our nation has the capability to match public investment in scientific research with other countries in order to maintain global competitiveness abroad in addition to furthering economic development at home.

However, as policymakers review efforts related to transparency and government travel for federal employees, we ask that you consider the valuable role scientific conferences play in fostering the open exchange of scientific information in not just the professional education and development of federal employees, but for all involved parties. The exchange of information at such conferences between federal employees, industry representatives, students, teachers and practitioners serves as a vital conduit in conveying science from a multitude of disciplines. The loss of one of these critical perspectives creates a knowledge gap that hinders the capability of all the others to apply their research effectively.

Each year, ESA holds an annual meeting at the convention center of a major city attracting several thousand registrants from the region and across the country, representing all major fields of ecology. The study of ecology alone includes research into agriculture, bioenergy, environmental sustainability, invasive species, fish and wildlife, and land management and water resources. These are areas of interest to virtually every cross section of human society. Collectively, this venue allows scientists from federal and state governments, academia, nonprofit organizations and industry to present their research in a manner that fosters collaboration and advances knowledge for everyone involved.

Maintaining the freedom of federal employees to collaborate in a public forum with researchers representing academia, nonprofit organizations and industry is critical to keeping America at the forefront in scientific discovery and innovation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark red ink, reading "Katherine S. McCarter" with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Katherine McCarter
Executive Director