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From: Shimada, Kenshu
Sent: 2017-07-10T21:15:53-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: For my GAC report: request for updates
Received: 2017-07-10T21:16:09-04:00
[SVP-GAC Mid-Year Report \(March 2017\).pdf](#)

Hi Scott, Vince, and Barb/Bruce,

After an intense past two weeks drafting the SVP comment letter about the national monuments with David, I thought I'd finally have my summer break but I received a message today from SVP Headquarter that I now need to submit my committee report... Because I will be out of town much of August (b) (6) with one scheduled M.S. defense and a few other students project to be wrapped up in the next few weeks, I need to put together my committee report for SVP ExCom in a week or so. Can each of you provide me with a brief paragraph or two describing some updates in your agency since my last report that I can largely copy and paste to my new report? Scott--as usual, one paragraph should be about DOI in general (particularly PRPA-related matter) and another paragraph BLM-specific updates. Because the SVP/GAC meeting is close, you can save the details for the meeting, but it would be very helpful if you can give me a general update for the purpose of my report. For your information, I've attached my most recent committee report I submitted last March.

Thanks!

Kenshu

SVP Committee Report

Committee: Government Affairs (**GAC**)

Submitted by: Kenshu Shimada, Chair

Submitted (date): 03/29/2017

Report Submitted for: 2017 Mid-Year Executive Committee Meeting

Committee Members: See **Appendix 1**

Summary of committee activities and relevant issues since the last report

- 1) GAC helped drafting a letter with the SVP Executive Committee to the US Government, including the White House, that lead to the establishment of the Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah and the Gold Butte National Monument in southeast Nevada through presidential proclamation on December 28, 2016 (see <http://vertpaleo.org/Society-News/SVP-Paleo-News/Paleontology-News/Presidential-proclamation-on-Bears-Ears-and-Gold-B.aspx>).
- 2) A GAC-based ad hoc working group that involved Mark Uhen and Matt Brown drafted the first edition of the Best Practice Guidelines for Repositing and Disseminating Contextual Data Associated with Vertebrate Fossils. It was reviewed, approved, and released to SVP members on December 27, 2016 (<http://vertpaleo.org/the-Society/Governance-Documents/Best-Practice-Guidelines-for-Repositing-and-Dissem.aspx>). Announcements to SVP members were made via e-mails, social media outlets, and SVP website to solicit comments on this first edition for future revision. The comment period is open through March 31, 2017, via e-mail to Kenshu Shimada, and he has received comments and suggestions from several SVP members.
- 3) The DOI's proposed regulation under the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (**PRPA**) became open for public comment on December 7, 2016, through February 6, 2017. GAC, along with a few additional individuals (Mark Uhen, Mark Goodwin, and Matt Brown), worked with the SVP Executive Committee to draft a formal comment letter from the Society. The final version was completed and submitted on February 3, 2017 (<http://vertpaleo.org/GlobalPDFS/SVP-PRPA-Comments.aspx>).
- 4) In October of 2016, Kenshu Shimada accepted an offer made by the then-incoming SVP President, David Polly, to continue to serve as the Chair of GAC for another three-year term. In addition, Taissa Rodrigues (Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Brazil) joined GAC in December, 2016.
- 5) According to Barbara Beasley and Bruce Schumacher, the two new point persons in the USDA Forest Service (**FS**), FS continues to implement PRPA regulations 36 CFR 291 1-41 (effective May 18, 2015). It is found to have a glitch, as there is an issue regarding the criminal portion of the Prohibited Acts. The \$500 felony level is different than the Laws pertaining to felonies. The FS's Law Enforcement and Investigation has been made aware of this issue; however, no progress has been made.

FS has issued approximately 2–3 dozen permits under the new regulations using the new permit forms package with no significant issues and little or no negative feedback from permit applicants. There will be a couple of minor changes to the application (FS-2800-22A)

and to permit (FS-2800-22B) forms forthcoming, but these are minor and intended to correct some cross-referencing errors in the forms and inconsistencies in use of some terms (i.e., use of "permit" or "authorization" when referring to the same thing). When the changes have been finalized and approved by the Federal Office of Management and Budget, FS will provide copies of the revised forms to SVP for posting to its PRPA website. FS still has some internal issues with staff in some district offices that are unaware of the new permit forms and/or do not know how to process them, but FS will address those situations on a case-by-case basis when they arise.

There are other notable FS-related news. First, Barbara Beasley and Bruce Schumacher have been assimilated into the FS Washington Office Minerals and Geology Management program, and are making a lot of progress with internal communication at all FS levels and are focusing on developing FS Paleontology Program Policy. Second, they are working with BLM paleontology staff to coordinate policy and procedures as required by PRPA, as much as possible. Third, FS will be conducting its first paleontological training course since PRPA and FS regulations have been established. The course is on the Geology and Minerals Training Office docket for some time next year. Forth, FS began to fill the FS Paleontology Program Coordinator (Mike Fracasso's recently vacated position); however, the hiring process has not happened yet because of the current hiring freeze.

- 6) US Department of the Interior (**DOI**) that includes the Bureau of Land Management (**BLM**), Bureau of Reclamation (**BOR**), National Park Service (**NPS**), and US Fish and Wildlife Service (**FWS**), went through, or is going through, many notable events. **Appendix 2** shows a document presented by Scott Foss (DOI/BLM) on March 28, 2017, that summarizes those notable events and updates. Another matter that may affect DOI is the 'Presidential Executive Order on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth' issued on March 29, 2017 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/28/presidential-executive-order-promoting-energy-independence-and-economi-1>).
- 7) According to Vince Santucci (DOI/NPS), there are seven notable paleontology-related matters in NPS to report:
 - i) During the week of April 1–5, 2017, Vincent Santucci (NPS Senior Paleontologist) and Julia Brunner (NPS Regulatory Specialist) will meet and brief key DOI staff and Solicitors regarding the public comments for the proposed PRPA regulations. They will also meet with Eugene Marino (FWS) and Lynne Murdock (BOR; by telephone) to begin to review and discuss the PRPA public comments. Scott Foss (BLM) is unavailable to meet with the other DOI representatives.
 - ii) NPS is conducting three separate paleontological resource investigations involving vertebrate fossils (see 'vii' below regarding one of the cases).
 - iii) A paleontology-focused social science survey will be administered at Badlands National Park in South Dakota during the summer of 2017. The survey will gather baseline information on visitor values, perspectives, attitudes and motivations related to fossils at the Park. This research is designed to obtain information about park visitors and the human dimensions of paleontological resources to support park planning and operations.
 - iv) Two dozen paleontology interns will be recruited to assist national parks during 2017. The NPS Geologist-In-Parks Program has helped to provide opportunities for young geologists and paleontologists to obtain experience in national parks across the US. The collective work of the NPS paleontology interns help to support paleontological resource inventory, monitoring, protection, education, curation and other fossil related activities. Many of the paleontology interns develop projects which are

- presented at conferences and sometimes result in undergraduate and graduate thesis research or published in scientific journals.
- v) The NPS, SVP, and Paleontological Society have begun discussions regarding the establishment of a partnership to promote volunteer opportunities for professional, student and amateur paleontologists to assist the NPS with science, resource management and other fossil related activities in parks.
 - vi) Dan Chure, Paleontologist at Dinosaur National Monument, has announced his upcoming retirement in June 2017. The park is hosting a Resource Program Review at the Monument starting in April 2017 which will help to map out the future of the science and resource management programs at the Monument.
 - vii) On March 28, 2017, Death Valley National Park made a press release calling for public's help to identify people who are responsible for illegally collecting vertebrate footprint fossils from the Park. The press release and its associated flyer can be found in **Appendix 3**.
- 8) GAC alerted the SVP Executive Committee concerning a proposed development through a proposed rezoning adjacent to the Dinosaur Ridge in Colorado (world-class ichnofossil site including the dinosaur trackways). On October 8, 2016, SVP sent a letter to commissioners in Jefferson County, Colorado, requesting for reconsidering the proposed rezoning as it threatens the preservation of the scientific value of the site. On November 29, 2016, SVP sent a second letter to the county commissioners to reiterate its point for the public hearing scheduled on December 7, 2016, and in support of two SVP members, Martin Lockley and Louis Taylor, who planned to attend the hearing to testify. The effort paid off, where <http://www.savedinoridge.org/> notes "Breaking News- our voices were heard on 1/17 loud and clear! The rezoning request to allow car dealerships on the NW corner of C-470 and Alameda was denied! After hearing 7 hours of public testimony (almost all in opposition) the Jeffco commissioners passed a resolution in a 2-1 vote to allow several of the requested additional uses (hotel, car wash, gas station) but they DID NOT approve Auto Retail!" A news clip covering the case can be found at: <http://www.9news.com/money/business/no-car-dealerships-for-dinosaur-ridge/386933804>.
- 9) In early December 2016, Taissa Rodrigues informed GAC about a pressing issue in Brazil. The state of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil has been under a heavy financial crisis, and the state governor has issued some austerity measures, that threatens the continuation of several state-managed research institutions. One of them is the Zoobotanical Foundation (FZB) that manages a zoo, a botanical garden, and the Museu de Ciencias Naturais in the city of Porto Alegre that houses an important vertebrate fossil collection. If those FZB programs are cut, employees will either lose their jobs or be re-directed to other functions. GAC is currently waiting for more information on the matter.
- 10) Julia V. Tejada-Lara (Columbia University-AMNH Ph.D. Graduate Student) has brought attention to GAC concerning a possible misconduct at the IX Latin American Paleontological Congress held in Lima in September of 2016. Participants reported abnormalities relative to the norms of international meetings that suggest the potential for financial misconduct and that have, in the worst cases, directly affected members of international paleontological community financially. The issue is partly relevant to GAC because a representative of the Peruvian Ministry of Culture was a member of the Organizing Committee as President of the Ethics and Regulations ("Presidente Etica y Normativa") of the meeting. In addition, the chairman and treasurer of the Congress, Mr. Carlos Vildoso, already had been previously criticized for the unqualified practice of paleontology during the 35th International Geological

Congress, held last year in Cape Town, South Africa. Julia has expressed her concern that these problems and irregularities have the potential to undermine the existing cordial and productive international relations among colleagues, and may hinder the advancement of paleontology in Peru. She also worries that such a misconduct is also detrimental for organizing or sponsoring future paleontological or scientific events in Peru. Because the Peruvian Ministry of Culture is involved, and because the matter negatively affects vertebrate paleontology, it is relevant to GAC and is worthy of discussion.

- 11) Randy Irmis brought attention to GAC regarding an emerging issue concerning the Kaiparowits Plateau in Utah that is part of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and is rich in fossils. Apparently, state and local governments in Utah are pushing hard to remove the Kaiparowits Plateau from the Monument because they claim it has no special value. There is a very real possibility that this could happen, either entirely or in part. Such removal could directly affect those paleontologists who are (i) currently supported by the Monument, (ii) need permits and access, (iii) expecting either financial, logistical or material support, or (iv) need the expertise of the Monument Paleontologist in any research related matter. GAC is waiting for updates from Randy.

Goals of the committee for the current and coming year

1) Respond to anticipated implementation of DOI's PRPA regulations

Although it is uncertain how soon the DOI's PRPA regulations will become official, GAC will work with DOI to discuss how SVP can assist DOI to implement the actual regulations. Like what SVP did when the FS's PRPA regulations came into effect, when the DOI's regulations are implemented, SVP should begin outreaching to SVP members regarding the 'nuts and bolts' of the implementation. To do this, GAC will update the SVP's PRPA website. Greg Liggett (BLM) will be a point person within DOI for our webpage development. Whereas the website should certainly serve SVP members, it should be designed in a manner that it would also serve invertebrate paleontologists and paleobotanists as well as amateur fossil collectors. GAC will work with Akiko Shinya, who is the SVP's Communications Committee webmaster. No financial support is needed for this matter at the present time.

2) Revise the first edition of Best Practice Guidelines for Repositing and Disseminating Contextual Data Associated with Vertebrate Fossils

The GAC-based ad hoc working group will review the comments submitted by SVP members to Kenshu Shimada on the Best Practice document and revise it to produce a second edition. The second edition is anticipated to be even more applicable to international members. Although the release date of the second edition has not been set, it will likely happen after the 2017 SVP Annual Meeting in Calgary, Canada.

3) Continue to develop the SVP's PRPA website

GAC will continue to work with the SVP's Communications Committee to improve SVP's PRPA webpage. While GAC will wait for new information concerning the DOI's PRPA regulations, GAC should solicit reviews on the webpage by FS paleontologists to make sure the posted

information is current. In addition, during the 2016 GAC meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah (**Appendix 4**), it was suggested that GAC should gather links and documents of fossil laws and regulations of other countries, and make them available via SVP's website. No financial support is needed for this matter.

4) Write a letter to the NSF concerning funding for collection curation and conservation

During the 2014 annual GAC meeting, Randy Irmis brought up an issue concerning the NSF funding which GAC may be able to address. He pointed out the fact that NSF funding for repository institutions currently cannot be used to support collection curation and conservation of natural (including paleontological) resources from federal lands. This is because the US Government sees such funding as 'double-paying' because of its misconception that the federal land agencies are already paying for curation of the material, which is not the case. One idea that came up during the 2016 GAC meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, is that SVP may want to coordinate with other societies to raise awareness, first to agencies and then higher up (NSF particularly; possibly also Government Accountability Office), about the needs and ramifications. It was suggested that GAC/SVP should start with bureaus, and work up the chain. The original plan was that Randy would write up a template letter with help of Scott Foss by the end of 2016 that should be addressed to the Chief of FS, Director of Park Service, etc. However, the plan was halted because GAC's priority had to be shifted to responding to DOI's proposed PRPA regulations. GAC will revisit this matter. No financial support is needed for this matter.

5) Possibly sponsoring a symposium or workshop on non-research-based collecting

It was suggested during the 2016 GAC meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, that SVP might consider sponsoring a symposium or workshop on non-research-based collecting at GSA (or maybe even SVP) to open a limited forum for talking about commercially-generated fossils. If SVP Executive Committee is interested in this idea, Kenshu Shimada will discuss the possibility with Jeff Liston.

6) Possibly have someone to share Canadian laws and regulations during 2017 SVP

It was suggested during the 2016 GAC meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, that GAC may have someone familiar with Canadian laws and regulations to share us (GAC and/or SVP?) Canada-specific fossil management information during the 2017 SVP Annual Meeting in Calgary, Canada. Because of other priorities GAC had (e.g., responding to DOI's proposed PRPA regulations), the committee has not had a chance to discuss about this. Because of the tight time-frame between now and the Calgary meeting, if any such event were to be hosted, it will likely be done internally (e.g. during the annual GAC meeting).

7) Monitor various government-related satiations

GAC will continue to monitor various on-going/emerging situations:

- Possible closure of the Illinois State Museum in Springfield due to state budget crisis (see 2015 Annual GAC Report).
- P.R. China's proposal to establish a law that would impact foreign scientific institutions including non-profits established outside of P.R. China (see 2015 Annual GAC Report).

- Recent US Presidential Executive Orders as well as bills listed in **Appendix 2**.
- On the footprint fossils stolen from Death Valley National Park (**Appendix 3**)
- Movement to preserve Dinosaur Ridge in Colorado, including its visitor center and world-class ichnofossils including the dinosaur trackway site (see above).
- Issues on South American paleontology (e.g., Brazil and Peru; see above).
- Situation concerning the Kaiparowits Plateau that is part of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah (see above).

8) Discuss ways to tighten illegal fossil trafficking across US borders

Because both Kenshu Shimada and Vince Santucci (DOI/NPS) have been tied up with other issues, GAC's Border Protection Subcommittee (Steve Brusatte, Jim Clark, Glenn Storrs, Ted Vlamis, and Kenshu Shimada) has been in hiatus. However, our hope is to initiate communication with various federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and Customs/Border Patrol. The first step will be to finish identifying SVP members for each state who may act as 'fossil experts' in their areas to assist federal officers. Then, the subcommittee will craft a letter to be sent to all selected individuals to obtain their consent to serve as 'fossil experts.' Once consents from those individuals are acquired, the committee will work with the SVP's Communications Committee to set up a SVP webpage that would link to the 'fossil experts' information. GAC also plans to contact each embassy or government, requesting information about each country's fossil laws and regulations, and the information is anticipated to eventually be linked to SVP website developed by the Government Website Subcommittee. On a related note, GAC revisited 'Paleo Hotspots' during the 2016 GAC meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. Identified countries included Mongolia, China, Brazil, Peru (marine mammals), Siberia (mammoth tusks), Madagascar (possible contact: Bill Jungers), European cave bear localities, and North Africa (Egypt, Morocco). The committee discussed that we may contact US Homeland Security about this, especially countries accepting or condoning fossils from other countries where collecting/sales are illegal. No financial support is currently needed concerning this matter.

9) Increase international members of GAC

There is still one more vacancy in this committee that should be filled by an international (non-US) SVP member. David Polly informed that SVP Executive Committee discussed potential candidates for these positions and provided the following names: Bolortsetseg Minjin (Mongolia), Nadia Fröbisch (Germany), and Jennifer Botha Brink (South Africa). We will discuss this matter at the annual GAC meeting during 2017 SVP in Calgary, Canada.

10) Support SVP's Executive Committee to revise AAM deaccessioning guidelines

Through the course of SVP's campaign to stop the public auction of fossil specimens deaccessioned by the San Diego Natural History Museum in late 2013, it became clear that there is a major gap in the American Alliance of Museums' (**AAM**) deaccessioning guidelines, particularly concerning natural history collections in which the current guidelines are designed for cultural and art materials, and not for scientific specimens. Issues concerning the AAM guidelines are not GAC's jurisdiction, GAC nevertheless warmly supports SVP Executive Committee with the effort to help with the process of requesting AAM to revise its deaccessioning guidelines.

Appendix 1. Current members of the Government Affairs Committee.

Kenshu Shimada - Chair

DePaul Univ
Dept of Biological Sciences, and
Dept of Environmental Science & Studies
2325 N Clifton Ave
Chicago, IL 60614
United States

Patrick Leiggi - Ex Officio Chair

Montana State Univ
Museum of the Rockies
600 W Kagy Blvd
Bozeman, MT 59717-2730
United States

Stephen Brusatte - Member

Univ of Edinburgh
The King's Buildings
West Mains Road
Edinburgh, EH9 3JW
United Kingdom

James Clark - Member

Dept of Biological Sciences
George Washington Univ
2023 G St NW, Lisner Hall RM 340
Washington DC 20052
United States

Philip Currie - Member

Dept of Biological Sciences
Univ of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E9
Canada

Ted Fremd - Member

Univ of Oregon
Dept of Geological Sciences
Eugene, OR 97403

Samantha Hopkins - Member

Univ of Oregon
Dept of Geological Sciences
Eugene, OR 97403
United States

Randall Irmis - Member

Dept of Geology & Geophysics
Univ of Utah
115 S 1460 E, Room 383
Salt Lake City, UT 84112
United States

Jeff Liston - Member

Yunnan Key Laboratory for Palaeobiology
Yunnan Univ
Kunming 650091
Yunnan Province
PR China

Taissa Rodrigues

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo
Centro de Ciências Agrárias
Alto Universitário, s/ n°
Guararema, Cx Postal 16
Alegre - ES, 29500-000
Brazil

Eric Scott - Member

Dr. John D. Cooper Archaeological and
Paleontological Center
1141 East Chestnut Ave
Santa Ana, CA 92701
United States

Glenn Storrs - Member

Cincinnati Museum Center
1301 Western Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45203-1130
United States

Ted Vlamis - Member

6 Brookfield Rd
Wichita, KS 67206-2005
United States

Appendix 2. Updates from Bureau of Land Management (document presented to Kenshu Shimada by Scott Foss on March 28, 2017).

Bureau of Land Management, Paleontology program midyear report to the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, Government Affairs Committee – Kenshu Shimada, Chair

Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (PRPA)

The Department of the Interior proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on December 7, 2016, and was available for public comment for 60 days, closing on February 6, 2017. Just over 1600 separate comments were received from 466 separate submissions. The breakdown of comments is summarized in the following table:

PRPA Comments		
Preamble	43	3%
Proposed Rule	Subpart A - Managing	131 8%
	Subpart B - Permitting	186 12%
	Subpart C - Collections	84 5%
	Subpart D - Prohibited Acts	9 1%
	Subpart E - Criminal Penalties	20 1%
	Subpart F - Civil Penalties	24 1%
	Subpart G - Response, Restoration, and Repair	8 0%
	Subpart H - Forfeiture and Rewards	3 0%
	Subpart I - Casual Collection	968 60%
	Miscellaneous Comments	135 8%
Total comments derived from 466 submissions		1611 100%

The full text of public comments is available at:

<https://www.regulations.gov/docketBrowser?rpp=25&po=0&dct=PS&D=NPS-2016-0003&refD=NPS-2016-0003-0001>

60% of the comments directly addressed casual collection of nonvertebrate paleontological resources. A significant number of the comments in other sections indirectly addressed casual collection, so casual collection is the largest consideration with regard to revision of the proposed rule. We have been advised that the recent Executive Order to reform regulations in the U.S. Government does not apply to rulemaking under PRPA, for now (see discussion on regulatory reform, below).

Regulatory reform

The new U.S. administration has made regulatory reform a priority, including Executive Order 13777 ("Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda") dated January 24, 2017. The Executive Order states:

Regulatory Cap for Fiscal Year 2017. (a) Unless prohibited by law, whenever an executive department or agency (agency) publicly proposes for notice and comment or otherwise promulgates a new regulation, it shall identify at least two existing regulations to be repealed.

OMB interim guidance, produced on February 2, 2017, states:

The EO's requirements for Fiscal Year 2017 apply only to those significant regulatory actions, as defined in Section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866

Executive Order 12866, October 4, 1993, states that a "significant regulatory action" means any regulatory action that is likely to result in a rule that may:

(1) Have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more or adversely affect in a material way the economy, a sector of the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, public health or safety, or State, local, or tribal governments or communities;

(2) Create a serious inconsistency or otherwise interfere with an action taken or planned by another agency;

(3) Materially alter the budgetary impact of entitlements, grants, user fees, or loan programs or the rights and obligations of recipients thereof; or

(4) Raise novel legal or policy issues arising out of legal mandates, the President's priorities, or the principles set forth in this Executive order.

In 2014, the OMB Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs determined that the proposed rule implementing the PRPA was not a significant regulatory action. As long as OMB continues to agree that rulemaking under PRPA is not a significant regulatory action, then the EO of January 30, 2017 will not apply to the final rule. The final rule is currently in preparation, so we will continue to monitor the guidance as appropriate.

IBLA 2016-129, Pueblo of San Felipe

In 2016, the Interior Board of Land Appeal agreed to hear a case resulting from a decision issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to deny a protest by the Pueblo of San Felipe that challenged the bureau's decision to issue a permit for fossil excavation. One of the points of disagreement was the BLM's determination that the fossil bed is not subject to protection under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) because it does not contain objects of cultural patrimony. SVP filed an amicus brief on August 1, 2016. The court formally accepted the brief on August 8, 2016, and the Pueblo formally replied to the brief on August 22, 2016.

The issue has taken on a new immediacy because the Pueblo of San Felipe has responded to the proposed rulemaking under PRPA and continues to contend that fossils are cultural items and therefore are subject to the provisions of NAGPRA. The Pueblo has asked for consultation with the Department regarding rulemaking under PRPA. The Department's office of the Solicitor has asked IBLA to expedite a ruling on IBLA 2016-129 because it now has relevance to ongoing departmental rulemaking. We will update the GAC as appropriate as these developments unfold.

Bills in the 115th Congress

Bear's Ears National Monument – Last fall President Obama issued a proclamation creating the Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah. The importance of paleontological resources in the monument was called out in the proclamation. BLM is looking forward to developing a management plan for the monument that will recognize the importance of its paleontological resources and their geological context. Many conservation and tribal groups are delighted with the new monument, whereas many other groups, including the congressional delegation from Utah and the Utah state legislature, are less impressed with the monument.

Bills to track in the 115th Congress

H.R. 481 – Reducing Environmental Barriers to Unified Infrastructure and Land Development (REBUILD) Act. This bill amends the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to authorize: (1) the assignment to states of federal environmental review responsibilities under NEPA and other relevant federal environmental laws for covered federal projects, and (2) states to assume all or part of those responsibilities.

H.R. 621 – Disposal of Excess Federal Lands Act. This bill directs the Department of the Interior: (1) to offer for disposal by competitive sale for not less than fair market value certain federal lands in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming, previously identified in the report submitted to Congress on May 27, 1997, pursuant to the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, as suitable for disposal or exchange for the purpose of conducting restoration activities in the Everglades region of Florida; and (2) within four years after enactment of this bill, to submit a list of such lands that have not been sold and the reasons why.

H.R. 825 – Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act. To promote the development of renewable energy on public land, and for other purposes.

H.R. 875 – Bureau of Reclamation Water Project Streamlining Act. This bill sets forth provisions governing feasibility studies for water projects initiated by the Department of the Interior under the Reclamation Act of 1902 (project studies).

H.R. 928 – Fracturing Regulations are Effective in State Hands Act. This bill gives states the sole authority to promulgate or enforce any regulation, guidance, or permit requirement regarding hydraulic fracturing on or under any land within their boundaries. Hydraulic fracturing or fracking is a process to extract underground resources such as oil or gas from a geologic formation by injecting water, a propping agent (e.g., sand), and chemical additives into a well under enough pressure to fracture the geological formation.

H.R. 1106 – Small Tracts Conveyance Act. To provide for the conveyance of small parcels of National Forest System land and small parcels of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management to private landowners, State, county, and local governments, or Indian tribes whose lands share a boundary with the National Forest System land or public lands, and for other purposes.

S. 316 – Protecting States’ Rights to Promote American Energy Security Act. To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to recognize the authority of States to regulate oil and gas operations and promote American energy security, development, and job creation, and for other purposes.

S. 335 – Federal Land Freedom Act. To achieve domestic energy independence by empowering States to control the development and production of all forms of energy on all available Federal land.

S. 338 – Scientific Integrity Act. To protect scientific integrity in Federal research and policymaking, and for other purposes.

H.Con.Res.27 – Expressing the sense of Congress that America’s Federal public lands are national treasures that belong to all Americans.

BLM Paleontology Program Staffing

Harley Armstrong retired from the BLM in January, 2017, leaving his former position vacant. There is no indication that the position will be filled soon. The BLM currently employs 8 full time paleontologists:

Scott Foss, Senior Paleontologist, Washington, DC
Brent Breithaupt, Regional Paleontologist, Cheyenne, WY
Phil Gensler, Regional Paleontologist, Santa Fe, NM
Greg McDonald, Regional Paleontologist, Salt Lake City, UT
Greg Liggett, State Paleontologist, Billings, MT
ReBecca Hunt-Foster, District Paleontologist, Moab, UT
Alan Titus, Monument Paleontologist, Kanab, UT
Colin Dunn, Monument Paleontologist, Las Cruces, NM

Contact Scott Foss, sfoss@blm.gov

Appendix 3. Press release and a flyer issued by the National Park Service on March 28, 2017 (information supplied by Vince Santucci).



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Death Valley National Park
PO Box 579
Death Valley, California 92328

760786-3200
www.nps.gov/deva

Death Valley National Park News Release

Release Date: March 28, 2017

Contact: Linda Slater, 760 786-3279, Linda_Slater@nps.gov

Fossils Stolen from Death Valley National Park

DEATH VALLEY, CALIF.—Park rangers recently discovered that fossil footprints were removed from Death Valley National Park. Trackways of mammals and birds were formed about 3 to 5 million years ago, when the animals left footprints in a muddy lakeshore area. Scientists visit the area regularly, photographing and recording the exact location of each footprint. They discovered the fossils were missing during a recent visit and reported it to park rangers.

Backpackers in the area were photographed and may have witnessed the crime or have information about those responsible. Investigators are offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the identification, arrest, and conviction of those responsible. Please see the attached flyer to view photos and for information about how to submit a tip.

“It’s illegal to collect fossils, rocks, or anything else in National Parks,” said Park Superintendent Mike Reynolds. “The purpose of National Parks is to conserve the landscape and everything it contains for the next generation. I ask that visitors come and enjoy all there is to see, and to leave it unimpaired for others to enjoy.”

-NPS-

UP TO \$1,000

**OFFERED FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO
THE ARREST AND CONVICTION OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE**

Fossils Stolen from Death Valley National Park

Release Date: March 28, 2017

Contact: NPS Investigative Services Branch

Tip Line: 888-653-0009



Special Agents with the National Park Service Investigative Services Branch (ISB) and US Park Rangers are seeking assistance in identifying the men in the photos below:



These men were in an area of Death Valley National Park where the theft of fossils recently occurred. They may have witnessed the crime or have information about those responsible.

If you have information that could help investigators, please contact us. Though you may remain anonymous, investigators are offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to the identification, arrest, and conviction of those responsible.

CALL the ISB Tip Line 888-653-0009

TEXT to 202-379-4761

ONLINE www.nps.gov/isb and click "Submit a Tip"

EMAIL nps_isb@nps.gov

MESSAGE via Facebook @InvestigativeServicesNPS or Twitter @SpecialAgentNPS

Investigative Services Branch

**National Park Service
US Department of the Interior**



Appendix 4. Attendees of the Government Affairs Committee meeting during the 2016 SVP Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah (image credit: Eric Scott).

