



COASTAL AND ESTUARINE RESEARCH FEDERATION®

Publishers of the journal *Estuaries and Coasts*

Joint Society Message for CERF Members

Dear CERF Members,

This Joint Society Message is being sent to you on behalf of the societies and organizations that contributed to what we are calling **The Federal Impacts Survey**, including the American Society of Naturalists; Society for the Study of Evolution; Western Society of Naturalists; Society of Systematic Biologists; Entomological Society of America; American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists; Women of Color & Non-Binary People of Color in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology; The Wildlife Society; Society for Conservation Biology North America; American Ornithological Society; Black Women in Ecology, Evolution; and Marine Science; Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation; and the Ecological Society of America.

The purpose of the message is to alert you that the results of the survey conducted to quantify the impact of federal and state policies, since 20 January 2025, on scientists in the fields of ecology, evolution, marine science, and environmental science was published on 25 August 2025 at this website: <https://www.firsthandaccounts.org/home>.

The website will publish a technical report that includes information about the motivation for the survey, how the survey was authorized and conducted, the demographics of survey participants, a description of the key findings and takeaways of the survey, charts showing the breakdown of participant responses to different survey questions, and the long-term implications of the survey. The most telling information comes from the open-ended responses to survey questions that participants wrote and gave us permission to quote anonymously.

We understand that the key findings from this survey may be concerning to many, particularly to members who are early in their careers. Amplifying each other's stories is one simple step each of us can take to raise awareness of the impacts of federal policies on the members of our societies. **Attached you will find a press release.** You are welcome to distribute the press release through your channels. Please consider sharing

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AFFILIATE SOCIETIES

Atlantic Estuarine Research Society
California Estuarine Research Society

Gulf Estuarine Research Society
Atlantic Canada Coastal & Estuarine Science Society
New England Estuarine Research Society

Pacific Estuarine Research Society
Southeastern Estuarine Research Society

the survey results with your colleagues, family, administrators at your institution, your elected representatives in the federal and state governments, and their staff.

Carl Zimmer from the New York Times is looking to collect stories from investigators on the record who lost a field season this past summer due to budget cuts, uncertainty, and chilling effects on travel. You may request to remain unnamed in any articles, however he would prefer to interview people on the record. To share your story confidentially, please email carl@carlzimmer.com or Signal chat carlzimmer.31 with the subject "Lost Field Season" and indicate whether or not you are willing to speak on the record."

Many CERF members have raised alarm about recent and proposed U.S. government actions; cuts to science funding, loss of key programs and datasets, and dismissal of federal employees in our field. These changes are deeply concerning, and they affect all of us working in coastal and estuarine science, management, and education. CERF has taken several additional steps to support our members and the coastal and estuarine community as we navigate these unprecedented times. Some examples include:

- Creating a Policy and Advocacy Rapid Response Task Force
- Collecting impact stories from CERF members through an anonymous survey (which will be run again in the fall)
- Having CERF Executive Director Susan Park meet with congressional staff to express our concerns about and advocate for relevant federal agencies and their staff, science funding, and other topics
- Submitting letters to Congress to protect the federal workforce, protect scientific research and integrity, urging reconsideration of environment and public health policy changes

If you would like to stay informed about CERF's policy and advocacy actions, share updates, and collaborate on policy efforts, we encourage you to join CERF's [Policy and Advocacy Community](#) through the [online application](#). Please feel free to contact CERF Executive Director Susan Park (spark@cerf.science) with questions or ideas for policy and advocacy actions we might take to support our community.

Kindest regards,

Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation



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PRESS RELEASE

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Survey of Scientists Reveals Disruptions to Environmental Research and Training Following January 2025 Policy Changes

Study of Nearly 1,400 Scientists Documents Impacts on Food Security, Disease Research, and Environmental Monitoring

A comprehensive survey of scientists across ecology, evolution, and marine science has revealed significant disruptions to federal research programs following executive branch actions that began 20 January 2025. The study, which gathered responses from nearly 1,400 members of scientific societies nationwide, documents widespread impacts on research critical to American interests including food security, flood mitigation, infectious disease preparedness, and wildlife conservation.

The survey captured perspectives from scientists across all career stages and sectors, including academia, federal government, non-profit organizations, and industry, with respondents geographically distributed throughout the United States.

The survey was published on 25 August 2025 at this website:

<https://www.firsthandaccounts.org/home>

Key Findings

Research Disruptions: Federal policies and workforce restructuring have caused significant interruptions to ongoing scientific work. Respondents reported disruptions to

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summer data collection projects and long-term monitoring programs due to direct funding cuts or uncertainty about potential cuts. These disruptions affect research supporting critical national priorities including food security, flood mitigation, infectious disease response, and wildlife management.

Restrictions on Scientific Communication: Scientists reported experiencing restrictions on free speech and travel, along with chilling effects that discourage open scientific discourse. Survey participants also noted censorship of scientific terminology and expressed concerns about the federal government's ability to meet legal mandates enacted by Congress.

Loss of Institutional Knowledge: The Reduction in Force has led to decreased government efficiency and significant loss of institutional knowledge within the federal workforce. Respondents documented delayed funding decisions, postponed collaborative research projects, and increased waste from cancellation of in-progress studies. Some participants reported breakdowns in longstanding collaborative relationships between federal agencies and state governments, academic institutions, non-profits, and industry partners.

Training Program Impacts: Quantitative data from the survey highlight the critical role of federally funded programs in developing the next generation of scientists. Respondents reported severe impacts, including cancellation of undergraduate training programs, cuts to graduate admissions at universities, rescinded job offers, and reductions in merit-based fellowship programs. Scientists across career stages expressed concern about an emerging bottleneck for early-career researchers and potential long-term consequences for scientific fields.

Concerns About Information Integrity: Survey participants raised concerns about potential bias in or removal of information from federal sources, as well as threats to the viability of established federal programs such as the Bird Banding Lab.

Long-term Implications

Some respondents indicated that certain harms may already be irreparable, citing disruptions to time-sensitive data collection, lost training opportunities, damaged career prospects, and harm to communities served by federal scientific programs due to the loss of institutional expertise.

The survey results provide the first systematic documentation of how recent federal policy changes have affected the scientific research enterprise that supports national priorities and public welfare.

About the Survey: The study was distributed to tens of thousands of members of scientific societies specializing in ecology, evolution, and marine science, with nearly 1,400

scientists participating anonymously. Respondents represented diverse career stages, geographic locations, and employment sectors across the United States.

Media Contact:

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Katie Lotterhos (American Society of Naturalists): k.lotterhos@northeastern.edu

Society for Conservation Biology North America: mail@scbnorthamerica.org

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About CERF The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) is a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advancing the understanding and wise stewardship of estuarine and coastal ecosystems worldwide. Members of the Federation include students, researchers, resource managers, policy makers, and educators representing academic and research institutions, government, industry and consulting, and non-governmental organizations. CERF publishes the scholarly journal *Estuaries and Coasts*, and the CERF Biennial Conference is recognized as the premier conference on the science and management of coastal and estuarine systems and resources. Learn more about CERF at cerf.science.