

\$10 billion fusion project. DOE officials feared the House panel planned to cut some or all of the funding, although House staffers deny any move to kill the project. Even so, Energy Secretary Federico Peña says he worked hard to save it. "It would reflect poorly on our nation if the United States did not fulfill its last year of obligation," he told reporters. Both bodies also set aside \$35 million for

DOE's participation in Europe's Large Hadron Collider project, although the House panel would first like a detailed report on the U.S.-European agreement.

■ **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Above the bar.** Science and technology would receive \$600 million in the Senate panel's version. While that's \$56 million less than the House has allotted and \$15

million below the president's request, it's still 9% higher than its current budget of \$552 million. The Senate mark adds \$8 million to EPA's request for particulate air-pollution research, a \$19 million program that the House boosted by \$35 million.

—Andrew Lawler, Eliot Marshall, Jeffrey Mervis, and Jocelyn Kaiser

ANIMALS IN RESEARCH

Chimp Retirement Plan Proposed

In their native habitats, chimpanzees are dwindling toward extinction. But in a little-known legacy of the AIDS pandemic, U.S. biomedical research facilities have filled to bursting with the primates—some 1500 in all. In a report released on 16 July, an expert panel organized by the National Research Council has now weighed in on the chimpanzee overpopulation problem, recommending a long-term plan that observers describe as humane but problematic.

Rejecting as unethical the easiest option—euthanasia—the panel recommends that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) create an autonomous body, the Chimpanzee Management Program (ChiMP), to acquire the approximately 1000 chimps the government already partially or wholly supports and shelter them for the rest of their lives. (The remaining 500 chimps are in the hands of private research labs.)

Both research-colony administrators and animal-welfare proponents welcome the report's recognition of chimpanzees' unique ethical status as humans' closest animal relatives. "I am glad that, finally, some consideration is being given to this problem," says Jane Goodall, the famed British ethologist. Neuroscientist Thomas Insel, director of Emory University's Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center in Atlanta, agrees: "These are not rodents. We've got to make sure these animals are well taken care of over the long term." Insel and other scientists worry, however, that ChiMP could transform research centers such as Yerkes into mere warehouses. And some animal protectionists fear that the proposed federal takeover could actually increase the number of investigators using chimpanzees.

A chimpanzee baby boom launched by NIH in 1986 to provide animals for the study of AIDS created the current overcrowding. But only a single chimp among some 200 infected with HIV has succumbed to AIDS, making the species such a poor model for the disease that fewer than 20 are now needed each year. The resulting high unemployment rate among chimps bred for AIDS research but never infected translates into a "financial hemorrhage" for the colonies, says Insel. "Our colony of 200 chimpanzees costs

about \$1 million a year to maintain, and we get less than half that back from sponsored research," he says.

The panel confirmed that the colonies are "heading for a crisis unless something is done,"

Institution	Colony Location	# of Chimps
M. D. Anderson Cancer Center	Bastrop, TX	150
Primate Foundation of Arizona	Mesa, AZ	80
Yerkes Regional Primate Res. Ctr.	Atlanta, GA	200
U. of Southwestern Louisiana	New Iberia, LA	300
The Coulston Foundation	Holloman AFB, NM	325

SOURCE: NCFR/NIH

says chair Dani Bolognesi, a virologist at Duke University. As a first step toward preventing that crisis, the panel—created 2 years ago at the request of NIH director Harold Varmus—said the current informal moratorium on chimpanzee breeding should be extended for at least five more years.

After extensive debate, a majority of the panel members concluded that reducing overcrowding through euthanasia was not an option. Chimpanzees "are not equivalent to humans, but they are different from other laboratory animals," says panel member Peter Theran, director of the Center for Laboratory Animal Welfare in Boston. "Euthanasia just because you are finished with them is not appropriate."

A better alternative, the panel decided, would be to transfer ownership of the approximately 1000 chimpanzees at the five major colonies to the government, which would support them throughout their 30- to 50-year lifespans. The cost shouldn't amount to much more than the \$7.3 million NIH currently spends each year to support the colonies, the panel said, and other agencies that use chimps in research—the Department of Defense, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—

should be asked to chip in. If it can be achieved, such stable, long-term funding for the colonies would be a godsend, says veterinarian Michale Keeling, principal investigator at a 150-chimp colony maintained by the University of Texas's M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Leaders of animal-welfare groups are worried, though, because the report predicts that dedicated government support for chimpanzees could eliminate the fees of up to \$66,000 that colonies charge to conduct research on a chimp. If researchers didn't have to ask granting agencies for funds to cover these fees, they

might use chimpanzees far more often. "Government support for the chimpanzees in a permanent retirement situation would be fantastic," says Eric Kleiman, research director for In Defense of Animals, a California-based group that plans to build a sanctuary for about 140 U.S. Air Force chimps. "But if they are looking to substantially increase the use of chimpanzees in research, we totally oppose that."

There are also questions about where the animals would be kept, because not all centers

are eager to become retirement communities for the chimps. "We are a scientific program, and my interest would not be in warehousing animals," says Yerkes's Insel. "The worst thing that could happen would be if NIH ... decides that the primate centers should take all of this on." Alternatively, surplus chimps could be sent to private sanctuaries or to new national sanctuaries, the panel suggested.

Louis Sibal, director of the NIH's Office of Laboratory Animal Research, says no decisions have been made about what to do with the animals. "People here at NIH are pleased with the report. ... Now we've got to powwow to see how [the recommendations] can be implemented."

—Wade Roush



Aging apes. Federal panel urges lifetime aid.

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