



Contact:
Ms. Breen Byrnes, +1-202-633-8730; bbyrnes@eol.org
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EOL officials are available for interviews

Encyclopedia of Life Leadership Transitions

May 12, 2010 - Washington, DC - After more than three years of distinguished leadership, Dr. James Edwards will be stepping down as Executive Director of the Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) effective the end of May 2010 due to health reasons. He will continue his involvement with EOL in the role of Senior Advisor.

Dr. Edwards did an outstanding job in establishing the partnership for EOL, establishing the governance, securing funding, engaging partners and delivering some of the first products through www.eol.org. Thanks to his leadership and the team he helped assemble, as of April 2010 nearly 400,000 species pages are available on-line, linked to more than 27 million pages of literature through the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Dr. Edwards also engaged more than 60 partner institutions and established agreements for several regional EOL versions around the world.

“It was a great pleasure to be present at the creation of the Encyclopedia of Life,” said Dr. Edwards.

“While I regret I will not be able to continue in my day-to-day role as Executive Director, I look forward to contributing my advice and expertise to EOL. I wish to thank the entire EOL community for their support and encouragement.”

The EOL Steering Committee met on April 30 and decided to immediately launch the search for a new Executive Director. This person will be based at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and will have overall responsibility for the leadership and management of EOL. The announcement for this position will be available shortly and nominations of strong candidates of any nationality are invited.

The Steering Committee also decided to appoint Dr. Cristián Samper as Acting Executive Director of EOL. Dr. Samper has been the Director of the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution since 2003. He has served as a member of the EOL Steering Committee since the beginning of the project and is the principal investigator of the founding grants from the MacArthur and Sloan foundations. He will be assisted in this role by Mr. Robert Corrigan, EOL Product Manager, who has been appointed Acting Deputy Director, and by the leaders of the various components and the EOL Secretariat staff.

Dr. James Hanken (Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology) will continue to chair the EOL Steering Committee until the end of his current term on June 30, 2010, when he will be succeeded by Mr. Graham Higley (Natural History Museum, London).

About the Encyclopedia of Life: Encyclopedia of Life is an unprecedented effort that brings together several of the world's leading science institutions—Harvard University, the Field Museum of Natural History, the Marine Biological Laboratory, the Smithsonian Institution, the Biodiversity Heritage Library, and the Missouri Botanical Garden—all with the common goal to transform the science of biology and our understanding of life on Earth. It provides freely accessible information for users around the world about all of the 1.9 million known species on our planet. Please visit www.eol.org for more information.