



May 15, 2008

National Science Foundation
Washington, D.C.

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to support the proposal of Dr. Arthur Bogan of the North Carolina State Museum for funding needed to curate the Herbert Athearn mollusk collection. We believe this collection, and its proper disposition, is of the utmost importance. This represents the most important private collection in the United States and undoubtedly one of the most important in the world.

Mr. Athearn, an avocational naturalist, collected in innumerable watersheds in North America. The data contained in the Athearn collection is invaluable; many mussel and freshwater snail species have been lost since the time of his collections to dams, habitat alterations, and pollution. The locality information that accompanies the collection is of in itself, invaluable. Considering the degree of detail in the field notes and label data that accompany, the collection is far ahead of its time. Upon curation, this collection will represent one of the most significant sources of museum data for locations and dates of observation for many extinct and endangered freshwater mollusks. It will also provide the larger malacological community with access to shell material that can be used to glean genetic information from tissue samples, as well as morphometric data from shells.

We feel this collection is of vital importance to better understanding the zoogeography of freshwater mollusks in the United States and North America, and cannot underscore enough the need for this collection to be properly curated. Please consider our comments when evaluating Dr. Bogan's proposal.

Sincerely,

Steve Ahlstedt, President
Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society