

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

RESEARCH

Subglacial lake life

Researchers have found live microbes in water and sediment samples taken from Lake Whillans, a small body of water buried 800 metres beneath Antarctic ice. If the findings, confirmed to *Nature* on 10 February, hold up, it will mark the first time that life has been discovered in a subglacial lake. The US expedition team penetrated the lake late last month. See go.nature.com/y1kcw8 for more.

Bullying checks

Australia's national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Research Organisation, says that it will appoint an external investigator to review accusations of bullying made by former employees. The agency has been troubled by complaints in recent years, and was last year told by a government watchdog to improve its systems. See go.nature.com/yznbnz for more.

Landsat 8 lifts off

NASA launched the United States' latest Earth-observing satellite, Landsat 8, from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on 11 February. The satellite is due to begin

NUMBER CRUNCH

\$3.25 bn

The amount, plus royalties, promised by Biogen Idec, a drug company in Weston, Massachusetts, for all rights to Tysabri, a multiple-sclerosis drug developed by Elan in Dublin. Sales of Tysabri were worth US\$1.6 billion last year.



WORLD VISION/AP

Solomon Islands tsunami kills villagers

A tsunami caused by a magnitude-8.0 quake in the South Pacific killed at least six villagers on Santa Cruz Island on 6 February, even though a timely alert from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii prompted large-scale evacuations. The region — at the eastern

margin of the Australia tectonic plate — is one of Earth's most seismically active areas. Experts say that it is often difficult to communicate tsunami warnings to all parts of remote Pacific archipelagos, such as the Solomon Islands. See go.nature.com/z6zjk3 for more.

operations within 90 days, and will extend and improve a 40-year data record of global environmental change, helping scientists to track and study issues including deforestation and melting glaciers. See go.nature.com/wnykfa for more.

POLICY

Fishing reforms

The European Parliament approved a major shake-up of the region's fishing industry in a vote on 6 February. Scientists have long called for changes to the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy, which they blame for some species being fished at unsustainable levels. The parliament voted to end the practice of throwing back fish

that are not the target species or are too small, which is wasteful because these fish often die anyway. The vote also supported improved practices for managing fish populations to maintain the maximum possible harvest on a permanent basis. The proposals will be finalized in discussions between the parliament, the European Council and the European Commission. See go.nature.com/2swipm for more.

Chemical safety

The world's most extensive chemical-safety regulation, implemented five years ago in Europe, is working well, says a review published by the European Commission on 5 February. The REACH regulation (registration,

evaluation, authorization and restriction of chemicals) requires companies that produce or sell chemicals in Europe to register toxicity data on the compounds and to propose tests needed to clarify their biological effects. The law has improved the quality and quantity of information available about chemicals on the market, says the review, but European Union member states need to make more effort to ensure that companies comply. See go.nature.com/chuxs for more.

EU budget deal

European leaders agreed on 8 February to a €125.6-billion (US\$168-billion) budget for the period 2014–20 for initiatives to boost Europe's competitiveness, including

the Horizon 2020 research programme. See pages 147 and 159 for more.

PEOPLE

Minister resigns

Germany's science and education minister, Annette Schavan, resigned on 9 February, four days after the University of Düsseldorf confirmed accusations of plagiarism in her doctoral thesis and revoked her PhD. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has nominated Johanna Wanka (former education minister in the state of Lower Saxony) to succeed Schavan. On 5 February, a university inquiry concluded that Schavan had "systematically and deliberately" reproduced work that was not her own without proper reference in her 1980 philosophy thesis. Schavan said that she would challenge that decision in court. See go.nature.com/9gcstt for more.

NSF director quits

Subra Suresh, director of the US National Science Foundation (NSF), announced his resignation on 5 February, cutting short a six-year term after less than three years. He will leave the basic-research agency in late March to become president of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Suresh (pictured) earned a reputation at the NSF for promoting interdisciplinary research and international collaborations. He leaves the foundation at a critical time: all government agencies face across-the-board budget cuts on 1 March unless lawmakers resolve a political deadlock over the federal budget. See go.nature.com/noxpd5 and page 158 for more.

Interior secretary

US President Barack Obama nominated Sally Jewell, the chief executive of a major outdoor-recreation company, to succeed Ken Salazar as secretary of the interior on 6 February. Jewell currently heads Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI), based in Kent, Washington, and is a former petroleum engineer and banker. She is also a conservation advocate and outdoor enthusiast. If her nomination is agreed by the

Senate, Jewell will oversee decisions about hydraulic fracturing and renewable-energy permits on public lands.

Wellcome stand-in

One of the world's biggest biomedical funders, the Wellcome Trust, announced on 6 February that Ted Bianco will become its acting director while the charity searches for a permanent replacement for Mark Walport. Walport will leave his post as director on 14 March to become the British government's next chief science adviser. Bianco is currently the charity's director of technology transfer. See go.nature.com/vqmhl1 for more.

BUSINESS

Open-access launch

A new open-access journal, *PeerJ*, which offers authors a lifetime of free publication for a one-off membership fee of US\$299, published its first batch of articles on 12 February. Keenly watched for its unusual business model, the journal could dramatically drive down the costs of publishing, its founders say (see *Nature* 486, 166; 2012).

EVENTS

Polio killings

Gunmen burst into two clinics in the northern Nigerian city of Kano on 8 February and

COMING UP

14–18 FEBRUARY

The American Association for the Advancement of Science holds its annual meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. www.aaas.org/meetings

19 FEBRUARY

The US Supreme Court hears arguments in *Bowman v. Monsanto*, a case to determine whether patent protections extend to the subsequent generations of seeds derived from genetically engineered plants. go.nature.com/vbrack

killed at least nine people, including polio-vaccination workers. No one has claimed responsibility, but the militant Islamist group Boko Haram is widely suspected. Last year, Nigeria recorded more cases of polio than any other country in the world, but no new cases of the paralyzing disease have been reported since December.

Nuclear test

North Korea conducted a third underground nuclear-weapons test on 12 February. The test was detected by seismic monitoring stations of the US Geological Survey and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in Vienna, which reported "explosion-like characteristics". The yield is believed to be several kilotonnes, and roughly twice the size of the nation's last nuclear test in 2009, according to the CTBTO. It comes two months after North Korea launched its first satellite into orbit. See go.nature.com/dbrsav for more.

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TREND WATCH

Ivory poachers killed around 11,000 elephants in Minkébé National Park in Gabon between 2004 and 2012, according to figures published on 6 February. Gabon is home to more than half of Africa's forest elephants, and most of those roam the Minkébé park. A study by the Gabonese National Parks Agency and conservation organizations the WWF and the Wildlife Conservation Society says that populations are now so reduced that the species could disappear locally.

AFRICAN ELEPHANT NUMBERS SLASHED

Poaching has cut the largest population of forest elephants in Africa by three-fifths in the past eight years.

