

## &gt;&gt;NEWSMAKERS

Bill Clinton in the 1990s, and is a member of Obama's science advisory council. His wild, wavy locks prompted *The Washington Post's* gossip column to suggest he'd have "the most iconoclastic hair in Cabinet history." He would replace Steven Chu at DOE if confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

**Gina McCarthy**, an air pollution specialist who is already a senior EPA official, worked for Mitt Romney, Obama's Republican opponent in the 2012 election, when he was governor of Massachusetts. She is known for a tough approach to crafting data-driven regulations—and for quips delivered in a thick New England accent. She would replace Lisa Jackson if confirmed.



### Heart Researcher Wins Developmental Bio Prize

Insights into the mysteries of the heart have earned **Eric Olson** the 2013 March of Dimes Prize in Developmental Biology. He will receive the \$250,000 prize in Washington, D.C., in May.

Olson studies the genetic signals that control heart development at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. He and his colleagues have shown that newborn mouse hearts can regenerate to a surprising degree in the first week after birth (*Science*, 25 February 2011, p. 1078). They have also found a suite of proteins and microRNAs that promote regeneration in older mouse hearts.

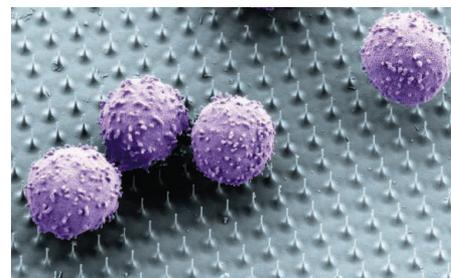


Outside the lab, Olson plays guitar and harmonica in a rock band called the Trans-activators. One of their songs, "Mamas, Don't Let Your Stem Cells Grow Up to Be Cowboys," was inspired by a supporter of his work: Olson holds the Annie and Willie Nelson Professorship in Stem Cell Research.

## FINDINGS

### Dietary Salt Linked to Autoimmune Diseases

Salt in food may increase the risk of autoimmune diseases, according to provocative results reported this week in *Nature*. Immunobiologist David Hafler of the Yale School of Medicine and colleagues determined that a pinch of salt triggered cultures of unspecialized T cells to produce large numbers of destructive  $T_H17$  cells, which have been implicated in diseases such as psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis. They also showed that a salt-rich diet makes mice more susceptible to experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE), a rodent illness similar to multiple sclerosis.



A salt connection also crystallized when computational biologist Aviv Regev of the Broad Institute in Cambridge, immunologist Vijay Kuchroo of Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues pieced together the molecular circuit that controls specialization of  $T_H17$  cells. An influential gene was *SGKI*, which helps cells manage sodium levels. And mice on high-salt rations developed a milder form of EAE if they lacked *SGKI*. The work doesn't establish that salt drives human autoimmune diseases, but "the stage is set to do precise experiments to test the hypothesis," Kuchroo says. <http://scim.ag/saltimm>

### Tweet, Shriek: On the Origin Of Language

The complex amalgam that is human language had humble beginnings: An analysis of bird songs and monkey calls suggests

### Evolving Landscapes Through Artists' Eyes

Bright orange flames burn through the spruce trees, leaving behind a forest of curling gray smoke and blackened trunks. These are artist Ree Nancarrow's impressions of Alaska's Denali National Park, stitched into a quilt as part of an unusual collaboration between creative artists and scientists.

Denali Park is home to the Bonanza Creek Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) site, one of 26 National Science Foundation (NSF) study areas chronicling change in the flora, fauna, and environment over decades. Bonanza Creek is also one of 11 LTERs that

has invited artists to reflect on these changing landscapes in oils, watercolors, fiber art, photographs, essays, poems, and other media.

"We are, in a way, collecting humanities data," says Fred Swanson, a retired U.S. Forest Service scientist who worked at an Oregon LTER, HJ Andrews Experimental Forest, and now coordinates its Long-Term Ecological Reflections program.

Some of the works are on display at NSF's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. Photographs from Baltimore chronicle

plants that thrive in the city; paintings from Konza Prairie in Kansas capture the heat and drama of wildfires; a poem describes a stare-down with a spotted owl. In one installation, rows of plastic cups each cradle a live mangrove sprout that will eventually be used to restore mangrove forests in Florida.

The exhibit is not open to the public, but Swanson hopes one day to display the works of the 39 artists where anyone can enjoy them. Meanwhile, you can see some of them online at [ecologicalreflections.com](http://ecologicalreflections.com).

