



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

August 2014, Issue 2, Pilot Volume

## ***Take Action!***

**Conservation Reserve Program – National** – The Farm Service Agency is accepting comments on a draft Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SPEIS) for the Conservation Reserve Program. The SPEIS examines the consequences of administering recent changes to the CRP due to the 2014 Farm Bill. For example, FSA must target sensitive land during enrollment in the program as well as provide for both managed and emergency harvesting and grazing on CRP acres. Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

- Who Should Act: Everyone
- Deadline for Action: 8 September 2014
- Actions to Take: Provide Comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Resources: [Wildlife Policy News](#)  
[Draft SPEIS](#)  
[Federal Register – notice of availability](#)

**Clean Water Act Rulemaking – National – Extended Deadline!** - The EPA has issued a new rule to clarify the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. This rule is critical to establishing protections for many of our nation's waters important for wildlife conservation.

Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

- Who Should Act: Everyone
- Deadline for Action: 20 October 2014
- Action to Take: Provide comments on the proposed rule supporting the EPA in their efforts to protect our nation's waters
- Resources: [Wildlife Policy News](#)  
[Federal Register – proposed rule](#)  
[EPA CWA Website](#)

**Endangered Species Act Rulemaking – National – Extended Deadline!** - The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service proposed 2 rules and a policy to increase predictability during the process of making critical habitat designations. The 3 proposals will impact the definition of “adverse modification”, the scope and purpose of critical habitat, and policies for excluding areas from critical habitat designation. Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

- Who Should Act: Everyone
- Deadline for Action: 9 October 2014
- Action to Take: Provide comments on the proposed rules to ensure they support the use of sound science in endangered species protection
- Resources: [Wildlife Policy News](#)  
[Federal Register Notice](#)

**SAFE Act Climate Change Legislation – National** – The *Safeguarding America’s Future and Environment Act* has been introduced into both the U.S. Senate (S. 1202) and House of Representatives (H.R. 5065). The SAFE Act codifies the *National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy* and encourages implementation within all agencies, authorizes USGS National Climate Change and Wildlife Centers, encourages states to develop plans that address climate adaptation, and otherwise makes efforts toward protecting our wildlife and other natural resources from a changing climate.

Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

- Who Should Act: Everyone, particularly those in coastal districts or other areas that will be greatly impacted by climate change
- Deadline for Action: End of congressional session, when the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourns its 2<sup>nd</sup> Session; likely in mid- to late December
- Action to Take: Call your Senators and Representative to ask for their support of the SAFE Act and climate change legislation
- Resources: [House Bill Text and Co-Sponsors](#)  
[Senate Bill Text and Co-Sponsors](#)

## Issue Spotlight

***Invasive Species and the Lacey Act*** - The Wildlife Society recently submitted comments supporting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s proposal to list five non-native snake species as injurious under the Lacey Act. The [proposed policy](#) would ban imports and interstate commerce of these snakes to limit the damage they do to native wildlife. FWS originally proposed listing nine snake species in 2009, but only four made the final rule in 2010, including the notorious Burmese python.

The five-year delay in determining a final rule to list these 5 snake species as injurious highlights a common criticism of the 114 year old Lacey Act – it takes too long, and as a result invasive species continue to spread and threaten native ecosystems. Senator Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced the [Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act \(S.1153\)](#) which aims to reform the Lacey Act. It proposes to employ modern risk-assessment techniques and focuses on prevention of invasive species rather than recovery. TWS and a host of conservation and environmental organizations support this bill in its attempt to improve federal designation and prevention of invasive wildlife.

The Lacey Act was originally passed in 1900 as the first federal law aimed at protecting wildlife. Its purpose was to prohibit interstate transport of wildlife that had been illegally killed for commercial purposes. The functional role of the law has been modified over the years, and it is now the primary federal tool used to prevent and address the spread of invasive wildlife species. There are currently [236 wildlife species](#) listed as injurious under the Act.

## On the Horizon

***Horse & Burro Advisory Board Meeting – Riverton, WY – August 25, 2014*** – The BLM’s [National Horse and Burro Advisory Board](#) is scheduled to host its second meeting of the year in Laramie, Wyoming on August 25. Members of the public are invited to attend the meeting and provide testimony regarding the management of feral horses on BLM’s lands. This meeting is intended to focus on the non-native horse’s impact on rangeland ecosystem health. A tentative

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agenda and information on submitting testimony for the advisory board was [published in the Federal Register](#). TWS will be submitting testimony encouraging the reduction of feral horse and burro populations for the protection of native rangeland wildlife and the entire ecosystem.

## **Trends to Watch**

***Ranchers and the Forest Service Clash over Endangered Species Habitat*** – Ranchers in the American Southwest are in contention with the U.S. Forest Service over access to federal grazing land. The recent [listing of the New Mexico jumping mouse as an endangered species](#) prompted the Forest Service to limit access to some watering areas in order to protect the mouse's habitat. The issue was most notably discussed in a recent Congressional hearing entitled, "[Threats, Intimidation and Bullying by Federal Land Management Agencies, Part II](#)" and highlights a rash of hearings where congressmen have expressed concern over what they view as federal agencies infringing on private property and water rights. This is another instance of Congressional pushback against federal agency oversight of land management and endangered species protections.

***Contention over Federal Land Designation*** – Congressmen are concerned with the federal government's involvement in the designation of federal land. As mentioned in the [June 2014 CAN newsletter](#), contention over President Obama's use of the Antiquities Act to place more land in federal management has been growing. Recently, Representative Tipton (R-CO) and Representative Gardner (R-CO) [expressed concern regarding the potential for the Vermillion Basin](#) to become a national monument. The two representatives argue that the President should not designate lands without consulting Congress and local communities. This same argument was mirrored in the proposed [National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act \(H.R. 3409\)](#). This act aims to prevent refuge expansion unless a law through Congress is enacted to allow the designation. Representative Fincher (R-TN) co-sponsored the bill, stating that his support is a result of efforts taken by the FWS in his district to create a refuge despite pushback, only stopping when there was a large outcry from the public against the refuge.

While TWS does not have a position regarding federal vs. state management of lands, we want to ensure that whoever manages the land does so in a manner that respects wildlife and other natural resources. Watch these issues to determine when and if your CAC should take action to ensure wildlife resources are managed appropriately in your region.

## **Policy Partnerships**

Developing partnerships with diverse sets of organizations should be a priority for your organization in enhancing your government affairs activities. Partnerships that focus on specific policy issues can be leveraged to make more powerful and effective statements to policy makers. This month, TWS and several other organizations submitted comments to The Fish and Wildlife Service urging them to list five invasive snake species as injurious under the Lacey Act as part of the [National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species \(NECIS\)](#). NECIS is a coalition made up of large conservation groups such as the National Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy dedicated to preventing the spread of invasive species. A unified action like this in addition to individual comments is extremely effective in addressing policy issues. Agencies and politicians are more likely to respond positively on an issue when they receive a unified message from a large, diverse coalition.

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Partnerships are just as important at the local and regional level. Find organizations that share your priorities and make joint efforts to spread your message. TWS works with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on many issues (including NECIS) at the national level; consider pursuing a partnership with the [TNC chapters in your region](#) on invasive species prevention or other land management and wildlife issues.

## **Policy Training Opportunities**

### ***Conservation Affairs Network Annual Meeting***

[TWS Annual Conference](#), Pittsburgh, PA – Monday, October 27, 8:30am-10:30am, Room 313

This meeting will allow CAC Chairs and active or interested members to discuss the implementation of the Conservation Affairs Network and current wildlife policy issues being addressed by their CAC. Opportunities for improving the Network, membership involvement, and policy engagement will be discussed. Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

## **Toolbox**

***Policy Toolkit Outline*** – The CAN Policy Toolkit is nearing completion. This toolkit is being created to assist you with engagement in the policy arena. The toolkit will provide insight into several aspects of policy engagement for TWS, including: managing communication within your CAC, communicating with policymakers, and understanding the policy process. [Check out the outline of all planned sections of the toolkit](#) and look for a full release of the packet within the next month. Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

***Conservation Affairs Guidance Document*** – The establishment of your Conservation Affairs Committee has the potential to be a bit intimidating. This guidance document provides a simple framework to help you get started, including identifying the CAC's purpose, outlining Chair responsibilities, creating a framework for communication, and providing a template for potential bylaw changes and a terms-of-reference document. Refer to it often during this establishment phase of your committee. [Access the guidance document here.](#)

## **REQUEST FOR MATERIAL**

The success of the Conservation Affairs Network and TWS's policy program **depends upon your involvement! Send us any relevant policy issue within your region or state that you need assistance addressing.** If your CAC has successfully engaged in a policy issue, **we want to hear about it!** We want to hear your stories, issues, concerns, upcoming policy issues, and action items for inclusion in this bi-monthly newsletter and other Network communications.

Contact: [Keith Norris](#), [knorris@wildlife.org](mailto:knorris@wildlife.org), 301-897-9770 x309