



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

August 2016, Volume 2, Issue 4

## ***Take Action!***

***Blue Ribbon Panel Legislation*** - The “Recovering America’s Wildlife Act of 2016” ([H.R. 5650](#)) was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 6. This legislation would dedicate \$1.3 billion annually in existing energy development royalties to state conservation programs, following [recommendations](#) from the [Blue Ribbon Panel](#) on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources that were released in March. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

- Who should act: U.S. Members
- Action to Take: Use TWS’ [Action Center](#) to contact your Representative and urge them to support this legislation. Enter your zip code to locate your Representative.
- Deadline for Action: December 2016
- Resources: [TWS News Article](#)

## **CAC Activities**

***TWS helps lead Congressional briefing on horses and burros*** - [The National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition](#), chaired by TWS, hosted a [congressional briefing](#) on July 6 to discuss wild horse and burro management with staff on Capitol Hill. Coalition members discussed the effects of horse and burro overpopulation, possible solutions to effectively manage these populations, and stressed the need for science-based policy decisions regarding this issue. Nearly 70 individuals attended, leaving standing room only. TWS Government Affairs and Partnership staff have been conducting follow-up meetings with congressional offices to continue the discussion. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

***TWS headquarters welcomes new policy interns*** - TWS’ Government Affairs & Partnerships program welcomed two new [Wildlife Policy Interns](#), Jennifer Becar and Emily Ronis. As interns from July to December, they will assist the Government Affairs & Partnerships team with article writing, policy briefs, coalition activities, and congressional meetings. Jennifer graduated with a B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Science from Oregon State University. Emily graduated with a B.S. in Wildlife Conservation from Virginia Tech. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

***VA Chapter Submits Comments on Rocky Forge Wind Project*** - The Virginia Chapter of TWS [expressed concerns](#) about a proposed wind energy project in Botetourt County, VA. The [Chapter](#) is concerned with mortality of birds and bats that may collide with wind turbines. The potential for forest habitat fragmentation and water quality impacts are also concerns. VATWS gave recommendations for minimizing bird and bat mortality, including minimal or zero operation of turbines during peak migration, and urged the development company to be transparent with any mortality data collected.. *CAC Contact:* [Nelson Lafon](#)

***TWS Opposes Sections in the National Defense Authorization Act*** - TWS [sent a letter](#) to Congressional offices to urge the removal of Sections 2864-2866 of the National Defense Authorization Act, which would prevent the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from implementing any potential Endangered Species Act protections for the greater sage-grouse and the lesser prairie chicken as well as remove ESA protections for the American burying beetle. TWS stressed the need for a policy process that allows science to drive policy decisions regarding wildlife and natural resources. *Staff Contact:* [Cameron Kovach](#)

***TWS Government Affairs testifies in horse & burro oversight hearing*** - The House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands held an [oversight hearing](#) on June 22. Keith Norris, Chair of the [National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition](#), provided [testimony](#). Norris highlighted the need to adequately address the overpopulation of horses and burros on western rangelands by providing the Bureau of Land Management with more management options to maintain herd numbers at ecologically-sustainable levels. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

***TWS provides comment on “Wildfire Budgeting, Response, and Forest Management Act”*** - TWS [submitted comments](#) on the “Wildfire Budgeting, Response, and Forest Management Act”, which addresses wildfire suppression funding and forest management practices. TWS expressed support for the overarching goals of the draft language, but detailed serious concerns with its potential to combat the ever-increasing cost of wildfire suppression for the U.S. Forest Service. *Staff Contact:* [Cameron Kovach](#)

## Issue Spotlight

***FWS plan for prioritizing ESA review*** - On July 26, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a [new review process](#) for listing species under the Endangered Species Act that is intended to speed up the listing process for those species of highest concern. Petitions will now be placed in one of five categories that are based on multiple factors, including threats to the species, amount of data available, and conservation measures already in place. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

***FWS finalizes controversial rule preventing Alaska predator management on refuges*** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [finalized a rule](#) in early August which restricts predator control efforts on all National Wildlife Refuges in the state of Alaska. This rule has been opposed heavily by the [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#), which view it as infringing on state authority for wildlife management. However, [FWS argues](#) that the rule ensures federal lands are managed according to Congressional mandates to conserve biological diversity. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

## Toolbox

***Policy Library Development - Section and Chapter Letters Requested*** - TWS staff continue to develop an online database that will provide searchable access to letters, comments, and other policy outputs from TWS. A database for content sent at the Section and Chapter levels is also in the works, but we need your help! TWS sections and chapters: **please send any letters, comments, and position papers** submitted by your organization regarding legislative or regulatory matters to [cmurphy@wildlife.org](mailto:cmurphy@wildlife.org) to help build this online database. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

## **On the Horizon**

***Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies 106th Annual Meeting - Sept. 11-14, 2016 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*** - [AFWA's Annual Meeting](#) will be in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania this year. Attendees will have opportunities to participate in committee and working group meetings, networking events, and speaker sessions. TWS is a bronze sponsor of the event and will have an exhibit booth to engage current and prospective members and display TWS resources. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

***TWS 2016 Annual Conference and CAN Annual meeting - Registration Open*** - Registration is ongoing for TWS' 2016 Annual Conference in Raleigh, NC from October 15-19. This year's conference will offer the chance to experience more than 600 wildlife science and management education opportunities, field trips, workshops, and more than 40 networking events. The Conservation Affairs Network will have a meeting during the conference - more details forthcoming. Visit the [conference website](#) for more information. *Staff Contact for CAN meeting arrangements:* [Keith Norris](#)

## **Policy Partnerships**

***North American Bird Conservation Initiative*** - [NABCI](#) is a gathering of government agencies, universities, and other non-government organizations through the U.S., Canada, and Mexico which facilitates communication and support for bird conservation throughout North America. TWS recently joined NABCI to contribute our policy and science resources to the effort. NABCI produces several items to highlight and promote the need for science-based conservation of birds, including the [State of the Birds Reports](#), which might be helpful to your CAC efforts. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

## **CAC Contact Information**

***Update TWS HQ on Conservation Affairs Committee Point of Contacts*** – As your Section and Chapters have new elections and appointments of officers, board members, and other organizational unit volunteers, be sure to update TWS GAP staff of your new CAC Chairs. Email [keith.norris@wildlife.org](mailto:keith.norris@wildlife.org) with the new contact information to ensure continuity of communications in the Network.