



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

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## CAC Activities

***TWS Arizona and New Mexico Chapters plenary on “How to be an Advocate for Conservation”*** – The [Arizona](#) and [New Mexico](#) Chapters of The Wildlife Society will host their joint annual meeting February 1-3, 2018, which will include a plenary on “How to be an Advocate for Conservation.” Talks will cover various topics including the do’s and don’ts for federal and state employees. More information will be added to <http://wildlife.org/nm-chapter/annual-meeting/> as it becomes available.

### ***TWS Submits Letter to Administration on Importation of Hunter Harvested Elephants -***

TWS sent a [letter](#) to President Trump on November 22 in response to his [statements](#) on suspending, pending review, a USFWS notice to reinstate the importation of hunter-harvested elephants from Zambia and Zimbabwe. The letter provides support for USFWS’ science-based process in evaluating the rigor of Zambia and Zimbabwe’s elephant management plans in order to determine if international hunting would enhance the conservation of the species.

*Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

## Federal Updates

***Trump Administration Modifies Boundaries of Two National Monuments*** - At an event in Salt Lake City on December 4, President Trump announced his Administration is modifying the boundaries of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments, both located in the state of Utah. These monuments, created during the Obama and Clinton Administrations, respectively, were put under scrutiny by an April 2017 [Executive Order](#) calling for the examination of 27 national monument designations made since 1996. While this is likely to be the most high-profile announcement resulting from this executive order, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke has just made additional news by releasing the final version of his [national monuments review](#). The report calls for more reductions to Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon and California, and Gold Butte National Monument in Nevada. The report also calls for the creation of three new national monuments in Montana, Kentucky, and Mississippi. Both the [Northeast Section](#) and the [Western Section](#) submitted comments to the department while Secretary Zinke was conducting this review, and requested that all monuments open to public comment retain current boundaries.

***EPA and USACE Propose Delay of WOTUS rule*** – The [2015 “Waters of the United States” \(WOTUS\) rule](#), which would have clarified the definition of the types of water bodies covered under the Clean Water Act, is once again facing an Administrative hurdle. In July 2017, the EPA and US Army Corps of Engineers issued a call for public comment on a new proposed rule that will rescind the 2015 definition (see Minnesota Chapter and Wetland Working Group’s comments on the subject [here](#)). In the absence of a final rule being implemented, the two agencies have now published another [proposed rule](#) stating that the Administration will delay the implementation of the 2015 definition for two years. Although the definition was finalized in 2015, it has yet to go into effect due to ongoing legal challenges. The two-year delay by the Administration provides time for the Supreme Court to issue a decision that will determine which lower court has authority to rule on the legality of the 2015 definition; that determination will likely lift the current stay, and allow the rule to be implemented while the judiciary further debates the definition’s merits. Comments on the delay can be submitted until **December 13, 2017**.

***Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations*** – Congress [passed a second short-term continuing](#) resolution on December 7 to keep the federal government funded until December 22. Once this self-imposed cliff is reached, it is looking likely that Congress will pass yet another short-term spending package with added funds for natural disaster recovery into the new year.

Congress hopes to have completed negotiations on a comprehensive spending package by early 2018 that will carry through the end of FY2018. The House already has a negotiating tool in the form of a \$1.2 trillion FY2018 spending package that passed the chamber in September of this year. The Senate however has been slower to move through the FY2018 appropriations process, and only just [released a draft version](#) of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies spending bill in late November. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

***President Trump Halts FWS Rule on Elephant Importation -***

On November 17, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated that the importation of African elephant trophies harvested from Zimbabwe and Zambia will once again be allowed into the US. This decision was made based on the USFWS’ determination that hunting, as part of these countries’ elephant management programs, would enhance the conservation of the species. USFWS recognizes that legal, regulated hunting can contribute to conservation through incentives and revenue to local communities. Shortly after USFWS provided notice of the change in policy, President Trump [announced](#) via Twitter and without any reported consultation with the Department of the Interior that he would be suspending this decision pending his review. The enhancement finding for the country of Zambia as well as all other documents related to the November 17 release of this policy have been pulled from USFWS’ website, but you can view the notice and findings pertaining to the country of Zimbabwe [here](#). TWS [submitted a letter](#) on the issue in November.

## Tools

***Policy Library Use for Sections and Chapters*** – The TWS Policy Library is a searchable database of TWS policy documents that members can access through [Your Membership](#) in order to learn more about TWS policy engagement. The TWS policy team is also looking to provide members with additional opportunities to gain insights on how other organizational units deal with local issues that are often seen across many different chapters and sections. Within the coming months, the TWS policy team will begin adding organizational unit policy documents to the library. If your organizational unit has produced policy documents such as letters to elected officials, testimonies, position statements, etc. please email them to [msimmons@wildlife.org](mailto:msimmons@wildlife.org).  
*Staff Contact: [Mariah Simmons](#)*

## Opportunities

***Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances Review*** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service are seeking public comment on the current [policy](#) and [regulations](#) regarding Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs). This program provides regulatory certainty for private landowners who have species on their property that are potential or current candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act. If a private landowner enters into and maintains an agreement with USFWS or NMFS on the conditions in which their land will be managed in order to promote the conservation of a candidate species, then the landowner will not be subject to additional land use regulations if that species were to be listed. In 2016, a few [revisions](#) were made to the CCAA policy that refined what end result the agencies should be looking for when evaluating CCAA agreements. This new comment period is seeking information as to whether or not the 2016 revisions should be modified. Comments are being accepted until **January 22, 2018**.

***Comment Period open on Forest Service Sage Grouse Land Management Plan Revisions*** – The US Forest Service has published a [notice of intent](#) to reevaluate USFS land use plans altered in 2015 as part of an effort to conserve the greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and prevent it from requiring listing under the Endangered Species Act. This notice comes after the Department of the Interior took up a review and recommended changes to the 2015 USFS and Bureau of Land Management plans that helped result in the “not warranted” ESA listing decision. The BLM has already finished their comment period on a similar [notice of intent](#), which TWS and coalition partners took part in [submitting comments](#) on. USFS will be accepting comments on their reevaluation and what focal areas this reevaluation of plans should cover until **January 5, 2018**.

***Public Comment open on Fourth National Climate Assessment Report*** –The U.S. Global Change Research Program, a cross-government group comprised of 13 different federal departments and agency representatives, has released the fourth iteration of the congressionally

mandated National Climate Assessment Report. This report, which was released alongside much fanfare due to its conclusions on [climate change](#) being in contrast with statements made by the Administration, aims to compile key findings and information on the current state of climate science in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in research capacity, draw conclusions, and keep Americans informed. Volume I of this report, titled the [Climate Science Special Report](#), was published in November 2017. The second volume of the report, titled *Climate Change Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States*, was published to the [Federal Register](#) as a draft version for public comment, and analyses the impacts of global change that are described in Volume I. Comments on Volume II can be submitted until **January 31, 2017**.

***Grizzly Bear Delisting Decision Comment Period Reopened*** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced it is collecting additional comments on its [decision to delist](#) the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem distinct population segment (DPS) of grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) from the Endangered Species list. This announcement comes as a result of an August 2017 DC Circuit Court of Appeals ruling on the Western Great Lakes DPS of gray wolves (*Canis lupus*). The court ruled that while the Western Great Lakes population can be considered a DPS, the Service did not adequately consider the effects that delisting this DPS would have on other wolf populations within the lower 48. USFWS is now seeking comments as to whether they should reevaluate the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem delisting decision in light of this ruling. TWS [submitted a letter](#) in support of delisting the GYE grizzly bear population in 2016. Comments can be submitted via the [Federal Register](#) until **January 8, 2018**.

## **Request for Submissions**

Do you need assistance with a wildlife conservation policy issue? Does your CAC have a success story to tell? Is a new partnership developing at your organizational unit? Send it in! Let the CAN hear about it and help you in your work. *Staff Contact:* [Mariah Simmons](#)

## **CAC Contact Information**

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