



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

March 2018, Volume 4, Issue 3

## CAC Activities

***Northeast Section submits comments on offshore drilling*** – The [Northeast Section of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted [a letter](#) to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on January 31 regarding the Bureau's [Draft Proposed Program](#) (DPP) to develop new National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) leases pursuant to Executive Order 13795. The Section recommends that no leases be offered until an assessment from the National Academy of Sciences of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that offshore drilling and gas leasing would have on coastal and ocean ecosystems is completed. Other chapters and sections interested in submitting comments can do so by visiting the [BOEM website](#) on or before **March 9**.

CAC Contact: [Eric Schradling](#)

***Manitoba Chapter provides feedback on Manitoba fisheries consultations process*** – The [Manitoba Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted [a letter](#) to Manitoba Sustainable Development on February 12, 2018. In the letter, the Chapter says it is pleased that the government is working towards maintaining sustainable fisheries, but does remain concerned about the lack of data to support certification and sustainable fisheries in certain areas, such as Lake Winnipeg. CAC Contact: [C-Jae Breiter](#)

## Federal Updates

***TWS submits letter detailing concerns regarding MBTA interpretation*** – The Wildlife Society submitted a [letter](#) to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke requesting the Administration reconsider its new [interpretation](#) of the words “take” and “kill” under the [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#). This new interpretation was formally [released](#) in December 2017 by the DOI Solicitor's office, and states that only the intentional taking or killing of a species protected under the Act, as opposed to the incidental taking or killing of a species protected under the Act, is considered unlawful. This interpretation is a reversal of the long-standing interpretation held by several previous Administrations that incidental take is covered under the Act, and replaces the Obama Administration's codified [interpretation](#) of the law released in January 2017.

Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)

***Recovering America's Wildlife Act, Modernizing the Pittman Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act Receive Subcommittee Hearing; TWS Submits Testimony*** – In mid-February The Wildlife Society submitted [testimony](#) to the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands in support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act ([H.R. 4647](#)). This testimony was

[submitted](#) in advance of a subcommittee [hearing](#) that took place on February 15, where bipartisan support for the legislation was expressed.

Also included in this testimony were concerns regarding certain provisions of the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act of 2017 ([H.R. 2591](#)) – another piece of legislation discussed in the February 15 hearing. TWS' testimony expressed support for the goals of the legislation, and raised concerns with provisions that would allow 25% of Section 4(b) Wildlife Restoration Fund dollars to be used for hunter and recreational shooter recruitment, including shooting range development and maintenance. Other provisions of this bill include making available all Section 4(c) and Section 10 [Pittman-Robertson](#) hunter education dollars for use in hunter and recreational shooter recruitment.

Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](#) (H.R. 4647), [Keith Norris](#) (H.R. 2591)

***Zinke Announces Modifications to Reorganization Plan*** – Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has [released a revised map](#) that outlines his goal for having common regional boundaries for all nine bureaus within the Department of the Interior. Currently, each agency operates on unique jurisdictional boundaries. The original plan to have all bureaus operate under the same 13 jurisdictional boundaries with lines drawn based on ecosystems and watersheds [released in January](#) drew a mixed response, particularly from Western state and local governments where most federal land resides. The new map still proposes 13 regions, but more closely tracks along state lines. **If you have questions for the Department or concerns you'd like to convey to DOI on how this could affect wildlife professionals and conservation, please send them to TWS staff.** Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)

***President's FY2019 Budget Request Released, TWS voices concern*** – The Trump Administration released its budget request for FY 2019, which begins on October 1 of this year. The request outlines a 17.5% drop to [DOI's](#) current funding levels and a 16% drop from current funding to [USDA](#) discretionary funding levels. TWS is analyzing the request and will be engaging with congressional offices as committees work to craft FY19 appropriations bills. Staff Contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)

***Federal Government Shuts Down for a few hours, new deadline looms with promise of compromise*** – In the early hours of February 9, Congress had again failed to reach consensus on a short-term funding deal for the second time in three weeks. This resulted in a few hours in which the federal government was partially shut down, but just as the morning commute was getting into full swing [another short-term measure](#) was signed into law. The federal government now remains open until March 23.

This short-term spending deal also came with a deal on top-level budget numbers, including an increase of \$68 billion beyond current spending caps for domestic programs. With these top-

level budget numbers, Congress is now [working on getting a spending deal](#) together to finish out the rest of FY2018, which ends on September 30.

These top-line budget numbers are important to the regular order of passing FY2019 spending bills before the end of FY2018. The unofficial word from House and Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee offices is that the budget deal has resulted in a higher top-line number for them to work with – meaning potentially more money overall for agencies within their purview. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

***Clean Water Rule Continues Murky Legal Path*** – On February 6 the EPA issued a final notice delaying the applicability date of the 2015 “Waters of the US” (WOTUS) rule for two years. It is unclear if the final notice will stand up to legal scrutiny, as the effective date of this regulation has already long past and cannot be changed. As the rule has never gone into effect due to court challenges though, the Administration argues that the applicability date for this rule has not yet occurred and can be modified. If the courts push back against the EPA’s maneuver, the agency will likely have to complete a formal rulemaking process to in order to repeal the rule.

If the Trump Administration had not taken immediate action by publishing this final notice, the 2015 rule, which clarifies the types of bodies of water covered under the Clean Water Act, would likely have gone into effect. This final notice was issued as a result of a [January Supreme Court ruling](#) that stated decisions on the legality of WOTUS should be decided in district court. This caused the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, where the Trump Administration had hoped the case would be decided, to lift their stay on WOTUS, which until recently had prevented the rule from going into effect.

## **Tools**

***Recording Available of Recovering America’s Wildlife Act Grassroots Advocacy Webinar*** – Several TWS and AFS organizational unit representatives participated in the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act Grassroots Advocacy webinar hosted by American Fisheries Society. As noted in the webinar, now is an excellent time to recruit your chapter and section members to [call](#) or [email](#) their House members, connect with your nearby [AFS](#) or [NWF](#) affiliate to schedule an in-district meeting, and write Chapter/Section letters or [resolutions](#) of support to send to your state’s House delegation. The webinar recording is available to anyone that did not get a chance to view it live, or to anyone that wants to watch it again. To watch, just click on the [link](#), fill in the requested information, and hit "register". You can also [view copies](#) of the webinar slides and the videos presented in the webinar. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

***Recovering America's Wildlife Act TWS Webpage Launch*** – TWS has just launched a webpage on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act that provides a background on the legislation as well as tips for individual members and organizational units to get involved. Check it out at: [wildlife.org/recovering-americas-wildlife-act](http://wildlife.org/recovering-americas-wildlife-act). Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](mailto:Caroline.Murphy@wildlife.org)

## **Opportunities**

***STWG fly-in on April 11 to push against proposed cuts*** –The [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program](#), the only federal program dedicated to helping states implement proactive conservation measures for at-risk wildlife species, would see a 50% cut under the Trump Administration's FY2019 budget request. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies along with the National Wildlife Federation and TWS will be hosting a fly-in on **April 11** for wildlife professionals to meet with their congressional delegation in Washington, D.C. on the importance of adequate funding for this program. If you are interested in sending someone to represent your organizational unit for this fly-in, please email [cmurphy@wildlife.org](mailto:cmurphy@wildlife.org) to coordinate planning efforts. Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](mailto:Caroline.Murphy@wildlife.org)

***Dear Colleague Letter in support of STWG*** – The offices of Representatives Don Young (R-AK) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) are circulating a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) in support of robust funding for the [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program](#). TWS, AFWA, NWF, and AFS are reaching out to House offices requesting they sign the letter before it is circulated to the entire House in order to ask non-signatories to support robust funding. We encourage TWS members to reach out to their [member of Congress](#) via [phone or email](#) in order to request their member becomes a signatory. **The deadline for members to sign-on is March 12.** If you have questions about outreach, please refer to the TWS [policy toolkit](#) or email TWS staff.

Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](mailto:Caroline.Murphy@wildlife.org)

## **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](mailto:Mariah.Simmons@wildlife.org)

## **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.