



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

April 2018, Volume 4, Issue 4

## CAC Activities

***Minnesota Chapter submits letter to editor on public lands*** – The [Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted a [letter to the editor in The Bemidji Pioneer](#) in response to State Rep. Steve Green's letter "Tax dollars shouldn't be used to outbid private buyers". The Chapter's letter to the editor expresses the importance of public lands and that "opportunities to protect remaining resources via a willing seller/willing buyer not be dismissed."

CAC Contact: [Styron Bell](#)

***Illinois Chapter monitors state legislation that would lift deer feeding restrictions*** – The [Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) is currently monitoring [SB2493](#) – "Wildlife CD-Deer Feed", which would allow a person to feed deer outside of the hunting season. The Chapter is concerned about the bill and is prepared to engage the Senate Agriculture Committee should such action become necessary. CAC Contact: [Scott Meister](#)

***Northeast Section publishes position statement on forest biodiversity*** – The [Northeast Section of The Wildlife Society](#) recently approved a [position statement](#) on managing for biodiversity in Northeastern forests. The Section outlined seven policies regarding biodiversity of forest ecosystems including to advocate the creation and management of forest heterogeneity on public and private lands, as well as to support forest management operations that conserve biodiversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique ecosystems.

CAC Contact: [Eric Schradling](#)

***Chapters and sections continue push for Recovering America's Wildlife Act passage*** – With the [Recovering America's Wildlife Act \(H.R. 4647\)](#) being one of TWS' top legislative priorities this Congress, several chapters and sections have stepped up to show support for this legislation at the regional and local level. This includes several chapters within the Southeastern Section, who have put out "calls to action" to their membership, including [this one](#) from the Virginia Chapter. Other organization units, such as the Illinois Chapter, have sent [letters](#) to their House congressional delegations requesting that they cosponsor H.R. 4647. The South Carolina Chapter, the Illinois Chapter and other units have reached out to other stakeholders in their state to see about their interest in supporting [H.R. 4647](#). Additionally, 23 organization units have signed onto a broad [stakeholder letter](#) coordinated by NWF in support of this legislation. If you

have efforts that have yet to be discussed within the Conservation Affairs Network, please contact Caroline Murphy, TWS' Government Relations Program Coordinator.

*Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

***TWS raises concerns about White House budget requests*** – The Wildlife Society sent a [letter](#) to Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney [detailing concerns](#) with the President's FY 2019 [budget request](#) and asking that proposed cuts to wildlife science and management programs be reconsidered in the next budget cycle. Specifically, this letter calls out the need for adequate funding within the USGS Cooperative Research Units program, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program, the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System, and the USDA APHIS [Wildlife Services - Wildlife Damage Management Program](#). TWS headquarters will be submitting FY2019 testimony to House and Senate appropriators on these and other federal conservation and management programs later this month. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

***TWS signs letter in support of increased collaboration on wildlife diseases in Alaska*** – The Wildlife Society signed onto a [letter](#) requesting the adoption of a resolution ([HCR 23](#)) in the Alaska state legislature that would support enhanced efforts and cooperation of state agencies to take the steps necessary to combat foreign diseases and disease transmission from domestic to wild animals. Specifically, this letter addresses the need to protect wild sheep from [disease transmission](#) caused by the [presence of domestic sheep](#). The state of Alaska recently had their first evidence of pneumonia in wild herds. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

## **Federal Update**

***House STWG Dear Colleague Letter finishes with record sign-on; thank you!*** - The [Dear Colleague Letter](#) led by Representatives Young (R-AK) and Thompson (D-CA) requesting fellow members of Congress [support robust funding](#) for the [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program](#) has finished up with 169 Representatives as signatories. Thank you to all organization units that facilitated requests for representatives to sign this letter. A Senate version of the Dear Colleague Letter will be circulated for sign on shortly, which we will be pushing Senators to sign onto during the April 11 fly-in. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

***FY2018 omnibus spending deal passes*** – The Federal Government will remain open until September 30 thanks to a top-level budget deal passed in February that laid the groundwork for funding caps to be raised and a [bipartisan spending package](#) to be passed in late March. This spending deal included level or increased funding for many federal wildlife conservation and management programs, including the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (+\$1 million), the USGS Cooperative Research Units program (+\$30,000), the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (+\$2 million), and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (level).

The omnibus also included much-needed fixes to two federal funding mechanisms important to the smooth implementation of federal conservation programs. The first of these is a fix to “[fire borrowing](#),” or the practice of freezing and depleting non-wildfire suppression accounts in order to pay for the rising costs of fighting wildfires. The bill provided a fix to this problem in part by enabling streamlined forest management practices and freezing the 10-year average cost of fighting wildfires to FY2015 levels. This 10-year average is the figure appropriators use to set Forest Service wildfire suppression funding levels each year. Once the Forest Service goes above this 10-year average, they will have the ability to utilize additional, emergency funds resulting in no immediate impacts to non-suppression accounts. This “fix” will be implemented in FY2020, and last until 2027. The omnibus package also permanently reauthorized the [Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act](#), a program [expired since 2011](#) which allowed funds from the sale of Bureau of Land Management lands to be used in the acquisition of BLM, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service lands deemed of higher conservation value. *Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)*

## Tools

***Reversing America’s Wildlife Crisis report released*** – The National Wildlife Federation, American Fisheries Society, and TWS have just [released a report](#) detailing the scope of the problem faced in conserving U.S. native species, the successes to date in conserving these species through mechanisms such as the [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program](#), and the need for additional conservation funding through the [Recovering America’s Wildlife Act \(H.R. 4647\)](#). This report, *Reversing America’s Wildlife Crisis – Securing the Future of Our Fish and Wildlife*, is [available for download](#). We also highly encourage you to send this along to relevant Congressional offices and share it via your unit’s social media pages. *Staff Contact: [Keith Norris](#)*

***TWS social media engagement*** – TWS chapters and sections have been working hard to support the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act through social media engagement, including thanking members of Congress for cosponsoring the legislation (e.g. [AR TWS](#); [NY TWS](#)), sharing TWS headquarters content (e.g. [AK TWS](#); [NC TWS](#)), directly engaging their members on outreach actions (e.g. [IA TWS](#); [TX TWS](#)), or a combination of the three. TWS headquarters staff has started to compile [sample social media messages](#) pulled in part from organization unit and partner organization ideas. This document will continue to be updated and is part of the [Dropbox folder](#) of organization unit items TWS staff is pulling together. If you have RAWA-related documents that have not yet made it into this folder, please let me know. **The current hashtags for social media engagement are #RAWA and #RecoverWildlife.**

TWS members can also get thank-you messages out to cosponsors quickly on Twitter through NWF’s user-friendly [tool](#) that allows you to thank a cosponsor in seconds. For other TWS engagement items provided by TWS partners, check out the [Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife toolkit](#). *Staff contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)*

## **Opportunities**

*Do you have thoughts about the DOI reorganization process?* – TWS headquarters is seeking member questions, concerns, or ideas regarding the U.S. Department of the Interior's [proposed reorganization plans](#). Please fill out this [Google form](#) to submit anonymous member input. Member comments will be collated and guide TWS' communications with DOI officials on this subject. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

*APHIS CWD Program Standards Comment Period Open* – USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services has just released [revised program standards](#) for its Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program. APHIS' Herd Certification Program is a voluntary program that states and captive cervid owners participate in with the goal of minimizing the risk of transmission of Chronic Wasting Disease. The revisions to the program standards include but are not limited to modifications to the program's live animal testing requirements, fencing requirements, and indemnity language. TWS headquarters staff is in the process of reviewing this proposed rule. Unless significant concerns are brought up during the public comment period, this revised rule will go into effect when the comment period ends. Comments will be accepted until **April 30**. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

## **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 organization 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 organization 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.