



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

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CAC Activities

Alberta Chapter expresses support for amendments to Fisheries Act – The [Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted a [letter](#) to the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans on December 18 expressing their support for amendments proposed by the Canadian Wildlife Federation to Bill C-68, The Fisheries Act. The Chapter applauded the effort to modernize the Fisheries Act based on updated scientific knowledge of fish population responses to harvest and aquatic/marine habitat management and agrees with the CWF that additional amendments will further improve the Fisheries Act's ability to protect and restore fish habitat.

CAC Contact: [Matthew Pyper](#)

Federal Updates

US Government enters partial shutdown – On December 21, several government agencies, including those within the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, shut down due to disagreement between Congress and the White House on funding for a wall along the US-Mexico border. This lapse in funding is affecting approximately 800,000 federal employees, including many TWS members who have been furloughed or required to work without pay.

Talks surrounding the reopening of the government are ongoing. The US House passed a legislative package on January 3 that would fund all closed agencies apart from the Department of Homeland Security through the end of Fiscal Year 2019 (September 30). The Department of Homeland Security would be funded through February 8 under the House proposal, which would in theory provide time for Congress and the White House to reach an understanding on border security. The proposal as it currently stands is unlikely to go anywhere due to a lack of support from the White House.

Staff Contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)

116th US Congress sworn in – The 116th Congress began on January 3rd with a flurry of swearing in ceremonies and a vote for the new Speaker of the House. With Washington expected to be consumed by the funding fight for the foreseeable future and new committee and subcommittee assignments yet to be settled, it is unlikely any robust legislating or oversight of the Executive branch will occur in the short term.

TWS' priorities that remain from [last Congress](#), such as continuing work alongside organization units and NGO partners on passage of the [Recovering America's Wildlife Act](#), will begin to pick up speed as members get settled into their subcommittees and portfolios of concern. Be on the lookout for updated messaging from TWS and partners on introduction and advancement of this legislation. In the meantime, you can check out [govtrack.us](#) to get better acquainted with your new and returning members of Congress, their voting record, and legislation they have sponsored and cosponsored.

Staff Contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)

Interior Secretary Zinke resigns – Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced in mid-December that he would [resign his post](#) at the end of 2018. This occurred shortly before the expected onset of investigations into the Secretary's conduct from the House Natural Resource Committee's new Democratic majority. A replacement has yet to be nominated by the Administration, leaving Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt in the role of Acting Secretary.

The vacancy at the top of the Department occurs alongside several other Interior posts with no Senate-confirmed appointee due either to no individual being nominated by the Administration, or the nominee not yet completing the Senate confirmation process. All pending nominations not cleared by the Senate at the end of the 115th Congress have now expired, meaning the nomination and confirmation process will start from the beginning. This includes [Aurelia Skipwith](#), nominated as Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, [Susan Combs](#), nominated as Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget, and [David Vela](#), nominated as Director of the National Park Service. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

Farm Bill signed into law – The 2018 Farm Bill was finally signed into law in mid-December in one of the last major acts of the 115th Congress. The [2014 Farm Bill expired](#) at the end of September without a replacement when Congress was unable to reach a resolution on differences between the House and Senate versions. The new Farm Bill retains existing overall funding for the Conservation Title of the legislation, and [maintains or expands upon](#) several established [private lands programs](#) such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Conservation Reserve Program. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

New WOTUS rule released – The Environmental Protection Agency and the US Army Corps of Engineers have released a new proposed [rule](#) that would modify the definition of "Waters of the US" under the Clean Water Act. This rule would remove the stronger protections for certain hydrologically connected wetlands and intermittent streams provided for in the [2015 modification of the rule](#). A 60 day public comment period will

take place once the proposed rule is published on the [Federal Register](#), which will not occur until after the US government reopens. *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 with the new contact information to ensure continuity of communications in the Network.