Conservation Affairs Network Policy Toolkit

SECTION 4: DEVELOPING POLICY RESOURCES

4.1 POSITION STATEMENTS

TWS and TWS organization units have a responsibility as scientific societies for professional wildlife managers and conservationists to address issues that affect the current and future of wildlife. The diligent development of authoritative, science-based statements on wildlife issues is essential for interjecting wildlife concerns into decision-making processes. Position statements issued by TWS and TWS organization units fill part of this role.

TWS Sections and Chapters are authorized to create their own position statements when 1) the statement addresses a topic upon which TWS does not currently have a position statement, or 2) when the statement would be consistent with existing TWS position statements (Article 7, Section 2 of TWS Bylaws). TWS Working Groups are encouraged to engage with the CAN and the process of crafting position statements by serving as sources of expertise when position statements overlap with their respective missions and goals.

Position statements are used to communicate the official position of TWS or a TWS organization unit regarding major issues in wildlife conservation. Statements are developed by TWS members based on their scientific expertise and perspectives of wildlife ecology and management.

Position statements should define the issue; present factual background data; describe the most probable biological, social, and economic results of alternative actions; and may also contain recommended courses of action. They should be relatively broad in scope, and address major areas of concern for wildlife conservation (e.g. spread of invasive species or energy development).

The formal approval process for position statements will depend upon your individual organization unit's bylaws, but may include approval by the Executive Board or the full organization unit membership. Depending on your bylaws, position statements may need to be reviewed and reapproved on a regular basis.

Draft copies of unit position statements should be submitted to TWS Government Affairs staff prior to approval to ensure consistency with TWS policy positions. Submit drafts to policy@wildlife.org.

See wildlife.org/position-statements for examples of TWS-approved statements.

4.2 FACT SHEETS

Fact sheets are communication tools used by TWS staff, organization units, and members to educate decision makers and other stakeholders on wildlife conservation issues - particularly those tied to current policy and/or management debates.

Sections and Chapters can develop their own fact sheets to elaborate on key issues relevant to their specific region or on issues that are not being covered by current TWS fact sheets.

Guidelines for Developing a Fact Sheet

1. Outline questions you want answered in the fact sheet, myths you want to dispel, and terms or acronyms you want to define. Decide on title and subheadings.

2. Thoroughly research the topic by consulting relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, current news articles, and laws or legislation pertaining to the topic. Look out for key numbers and dates that you'll want to include (i.e. current funding for the issue).

3. Draft and edit the text before placing onto a fact sheet template. It will be much easier to have the text finalized before moving around pictures and text in a template.

4. Format text and pictures into a fact sheet template. Most topics should cover 1 page back and front. Consider creating a template to use for all of your organization unit's fact sheets. Keeping your format consistent among all of your fact sheets can help your unit create a brand, be more recognizable, and simplify future fact sheet development.

5. Save the fact sheet as a PDF. A PDF is easier to send via email and post on the web.

Items to Include in a Fact Sheet

Introductory Section: Overview of the topic; include key numbers or facts that will engage the reader on the topic.

Call-out box(es): Quote, definition, or key question that you want to highlight (e.g. what is the difference between wild and feral horses?).

Pictures: Use images with creative commons licensing.. Many government agencies and individuals have copyright free photos available through Flickr accounts and Wikimedia Commons.

Pictures and captions should be able to stand alone. In addition to describing the picture, captions should include a source and a broader message about the fact sheet. Try to connect each caption to the central message of the fact sheet.

Literature Cited: Cite information in the text with footnotes and provide a "Literature Cited" section towards the end of the fact sheet.

Other Items to Consider

- *Graphs or charts* – visual representations of the central message can be effective

- *Timeline* – document the history of the legislation or issue
- *Maps* – what areas are being affected?

Tools for Creating Fact Sheets

There are several alternatives to word processor software (i.e. Microsoft Word) that will allow you to easily design visually-appealing fact sheets. If you already have access to Microsoft Office products, you may consider using Microsoft Publisher to draft your fact sheets. This software is only available for PC and will have a cost associated with access depending on your Microsoft Office or Microsoft 365 plan. Canva is a free design tool available online that can be accessed from your computer or your phone. This program allows for easy collaboration with team members and is already popular among TWS units for creating graphics and content for social media. More advanced tools are available through the paid version of the software called CanvaPro. If you are most familiar with Mac products, Apple Pages is a Mac alternative to Microsoft Publisher that can be accessed from any of your devices connected to the iCloud. Fact sheets and other documents created in Pages can also be exported as Word files.

Distribution of Fact Sheets

Fact sheets can be brought to meetings with decision-makers and stakeholders where the issue will be discussed. Fact sheets are an ideal document to leave behind for staff to have on hand (see Section 3). Members can print and distribute the fact sheets to educate the public on issues that affect wildlife.

4.3 TWS POLICY LIBRARY

The TWS Policy Library is available to all TWS members through their membership portal or via the policy resources tab on TWS' website. It serves as a tool for members to access correspondence on an array of wildlife policy issues. This includes sign-on letters, comments, and testimony issued by TWS, as well as advocacy and engagement documents created by TWS organization units.

Organization units considering engaging on a specific wildlife policy topic can use the Policy Library as both a research tool and a means to unify messaging across TWS organization units on similar issues. Past editions of the Conservation Affairs Network newsletter can also be accessed through the Policy Library. When exploring correspondence available through the Policy Library, you can filter results by:

- *Document origin:* Indicates if a document was created by TWS staff, a TWS organization unit, a coalition, or as part of a sign-on campaign

- *Document type:* Distinguishes comments, letters, testimony, recommendations, and other correspondence types

- *Issue:* Broad issue areas to help you refine searches (e.g. wildlife health, energy development and wildlife, etc.)

- *Scope Area:* Includes all TWS Sections, as well as the United States and an International scope area

- *Recipient:* Includes local, state/provincial and national legislative offices, regulatory/administrative offices, judiciaries, news media organizations, and non-profits

- *Keyword:* Allows you to search for specific issues (e.g. Chronic Wasting Disease, feral swine, Recovering America's Wildlife Act, etc.), and/or TWS organization units at the unit level

- *Date:* Allows you to refine searches by month and year

Policy correspondence originating from TWS organization units and their respective Conservation Affairs Committees should be submitted to TWS Government Affairs & Partnership staff to ensure the Policy Library stays up to date. Submit documents to policy@wildlife.org.

4.4 ACTION CENTERS

The TWS Action Center is a tool occasionally funded and utilized by TWS to provide TWS members and wildlife professionals an opportunity to engage with active wildlife policy campaigns. Campaigns in the TWS Action Center allow members and partners to access background information on the issue and instructions on how individual members and TWS organization units can contribute to TWS' involvement with the campaign. Campaigns also give you access to forms and easy template language allowing individual members to make direct contact with their members of Congress.

Targeted Action Center Content for Conservation Affairs Committees

As TWS headquarters funding allows, TWS' Government Affairs team is available to coordinate with Conservation Affairs Committees and organization units on the creation of targeted action centers to support priority federal policies. For example, a TWS Chapter may wish to create an action center targeting a specific member of their state's federal congressional delegation requesting their support for federal wildlife legislation. Action centers can also be adapted to target decision makers at the state level. **If your CAC is interested in pursuing this type of engagement, contact** policy@wildlife.org.