

Conservation Review Committee

2015 Annual Report

Following are key activities and accomplishments of this committee since the Feb 2015 meeting.

In response to our call to fill 2 vacancies this fall, we got 7 new members! Our Committee now has 18 total members, including the chair, the Chapter President (Ex Officio), and 4 members in each of 4 subcommittees: Native Plants and Animals, Land Conservation and Management, Environmental Impacts, and Citizen Engagement and Public Trust.

The Committee continues to be involved in the Conservation Affairs Network, an initiative of National TWS Government Affairs Department formalized last year to enhance collaboration between state chapter conservation affair/review committees within each section of TWS. Our CRC chair will serve as a representative to the Southeastern Section CAC. We have a good line of communication with the National coordinator, but have been awaiting more guidance from the SE CAC regarding opportunities to collaborate more.

Our Chapter was recognized in the winter 2015 issue of *Wildlife Professional* for inspiring other states to work on the feral cat issue.

The Committee drafted 2 letters, sent by the Chapter President, to:

- Both U. S. Senators in Virginia urging them to support funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program at \$70 million in FY2016. The appropriation came in at \$60.751 million, which was less than requested but a \$2 million increase from FY2015.
- All 11 U. S. Congressmen in Virginia urging them to support the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) by co-sponsoring HR. 2346, the North American Wetlands Conservation Extension Act. As of February 8, 2016, NAWCA has not been reauthorized. It continues to be funded. During FY2016 it was appropriated at \$35.145 million (\$1 million > FY2015). HR 2346 is still active.

Individual members of the Committee emailed a form letter template to their U.S. Senators and Representative asking them to support robust funding for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, U.S.G.S. Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units, and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. Federal funding for these programs was increased from previous years, reducing some of the impacts of sequestration.

Once again, we renewed our memberships to both the Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) and Virginia League of Conservation Voters (VLCV).

Submitted by Nelson Lafon