



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

January 19, 2017

Member of Congress  
Building/Office  
Washington, DC 12345

Dear Member of Congress,

Congratulations on your election to the United States Senate. As you begin your service in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, The Wildlife Society offers you our collective expertise as leaders in wildlife science, management, and conservation.

Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society (TWS; [wildlife.org](http://wildlife.org)) inspires, empowers, and enables wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation. Supported by the collective knowledge of nearly 10,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, TWS is a valuable resource in formulating wildlife management and conservation policies.

Attached is a document outlining major areas of interest for TWS. Through our work with other scientific societies and partners, TWS has built legislative momentum on several of these issues, including:

- ***Building Capacity for Sustainable Management*** – TWS supports several measures to improve the capacity of federal and state fish and wildlife agencies, including:
  - Supporting bills like H.R. 5650 in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, which calls for a new mechanism to enhance state, science-based management of fish and wildlife resources;
  - Working through a number of coalitions to advance a permanent and sustainable fix to wildfire suppression funding; and
  - Strengthening bipartisan efforts to provide needed resources to federal programs like the USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units, USFS Research and Development, and USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System.
- ***Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention*** – TWS will continue to monitor and support science-based, collaborative measures to prevent the spread of invasive species and harmful wildlife pathogens.
- ***Improved Wild Horse and Burro Management*** – TWS serves as Chair of the National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition ([wildhorserange.org](http://wildhorserange.org)), which strongly supports Congressional action to remove barriers to science-based management of horses and burros.
- ***Conservation Programs in the Farm Bill*** – TWS regularly expresses the importance of wildlife habitat on a mosaic of public and private lands. In the 2018 Farm Bill, TWS encourages Congress to maintain/strengthen Title II conservation programs that support quality wildlife stewardship.

TWS will continue to build on the momentum generated last Congress by providing you, your colleagues, and the new Administration with timely, practical, and science-based input for managing and sustaining the nation's diverse fish and wildlife resources to benefit the American people. For further information, please contact Keith Norris, AWB®, Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships at [keith.norris@wildlife.org](mailto:keith.norris@wildlife.org) or (301) 897-9770 x309. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bruce Thompson, PhD, CWB®  
President, The Wildlife Society



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

*Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation*

For the past 80 years, The Wildlife Society has served an important role in advancing the wildlife profession, while influencing and supporting the use of science in managing wildlife populations and habitats for the benefit of society.

Founded in 1937, our organization's mission is:

***To inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation.***

As leaders in wildlife science, management, and conservation, The Wildlife Society recognizes the following core topics as pressing issues in wildlife management and conservation.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE AND NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is a set of seven core principles that, collectively applied, has led to the form, function, and success of wildlife conservation and management in the United States and Canada. As a keystone component of the Model, the Public Trust Doctrine describes the common law concept that wildlife is owned by no one and is held in trust by government for the benefit of present and future generations. Through continued application and refinement of this Model to contemporary wildlife conservation needs we can maintain and foster landscapes that support viable wildlife populations while still providing for the sustainable public use and enjoyment of public trust resources.

## **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WILDLIFE POPULATIONS**

The future of our fish and wildlife resources and their habitats depend upon the skilled stewardship of wildlife and land management professionals. The current system of fish and wildlife funding, however, leaves many of our state and federal fish and wildlife agencies with limited capacity to adequately address the challenges created by human population growth, land conversion, climate change, and invasive species. By providing additional fiscal and staff resources to these agencies, we can expect improved sustainability of wildlife resources and decreased regulatory uncertainty.

## **PROMOTING SCIENCE IN POLICY AND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

Federal land management agencies implement planning and land use rules that have a direct impact on wildlife resources and management strategies across the United States. In making these determinations, agencies should openly acknowledge and consider the best available science and likely consequences arising from a range of management options. This requires the use of professionally-trained individuals capable of navigating the complexities of modern science-based management. It also requires providing agencies with sufficient research capacity to advance the best available science when needed to make an informed decision.

## **INCLUDING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

All forms of energy development can affect wildlife and wildlife habitats. Energy development, though, remains an integral part of modern society. In meeting America's growing energy needs, all energy sources—including but not limited to coal, oil, gas, wind, solar, and biomass—should be explored, but this exploration can and should be accompanied with measures that prevent, minimize, or mitigate negative impacts on wildlife populations and their habitats.

## **ENHANCING ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY**

Conservation of threatened and endangered species presents one of the most formidable challenges to society. Rapid modification of natural ecosystems is causing wild flora and fauna to become extinct at a rate far exceeding the natural evolutionary pace. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 is a vital tool in preventing species extinction, but must be complemented by broader societal commitments and public-private partnerships to fully address larger sociocultural and socioeconomic issues that frequently drive species extinction and recovery.

## **IMPROVING FEDERAL EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES**

Current federal policy may limit federal employees from serving on the boards of professional societies or attending professional society meetings and conferences. Curtailing this involvement is detrimental to federal agencies that employ scientists because it may distance the scientist from the full interchange of information, while restricting their professional development—thus compromising processes vital to providing the best scientific advice to the agency.

## **STRENGTHENING INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT**

An invasive species is an established plant or animal that causes direct or indirect economic or environmental harm within an ecosystem, or will likely cause such harm if introduced to a particular area. The effects of invasive species on the natural world and their economic costs to society are substantial and increasing—currently estimated at over \$120 billion a year in the U.S. Direct and effective management efforts to prevent, control, and/or remove invasive species can avert consequent negative impacts and ensure the long-term sustainability of important public trust resources.

## **PRIORITIZING HABITAT CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LANDS**

Human population growth has resulted in dramatic reductions and alterations in the quality and availability of wildlife habitat. With over 70 percent of lands in the United States in private ownership, effective conservation of wildlife populations depends upon the management actions of private landowners in combination with state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. Voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs, like those in the Farm Bill, help build these public-private partnerships by providing technical assistance and cost-sharing options for landowners wishing to improve habitat, reduce erosion, and/or address other resource concerns on their land.

## **RECOGNIZING AND ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Annual atmospheric carbon dioxide levels now exceed 400 parts per million. This has caused significant changes in the earth's climatic conditions, resulting in severe alterations to regional temperatures and precipitation patterns. These climatic changes have had, and will likely continue to have, significant and far-reaching impacts to wildlife populations; thus requiring the development and implementation of new, science-based strategies to ensure wildlife populations and their habitats have the opportunity to adapt to greater climatic uncertainty.

## **ADDRESSING THREATS TO WILDLIFE HEALTH**

Growing threats to wildlife health include the spread of wildlife diseases via the human-caused or facilitated movement of animals or pathogens and the addition of broad-spectrum toxicants to the environment—like the use of lead (Pb) in ammunition and fishing tackle. Novel or introduced wildlife diseases can have severe consequences on native wildlife populations, especially when combined with other ecological stressors, like toxicants. Mitigating these threats will require rapid response to emerging diseases and a new societal focus on collaborative prevention.