



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

February 2020, Volume 6, Issue 2

On the Horizon

TWS Council will meet at North American Conference – The [85th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference](#) will take place March 8-13 in Omaha, NE. TWS' Council will meeting March 8-9 in conjunction with the conference. *Staff Contact:* [Keith Norris](#)

Federal budgeting for FY2021 starts soon – The [federal appropriations process](#) for Fiscal Year 2021 will kick off in mid-February when the White House is expected to transmit to Congress their proposed budget for FY 2021. House, and eventually Senate, lawmakers will then begin their own hearings and solicitation of stakeholder comment on funding levels for the next fiscal year. Throughout the FY 2021 appropriations process, TWS will advocate for federal funding for the wildlife profession through appropriations requests and meetings with relevant members of Congress. You can check out our Department of the Interior funding recommendations from the FY 2020 cycle [here](#). *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

Opportunities

Sign-on to support the Migratory Bird Protection Act – The Migratory Bird Protection Act ([H.R. 5552](#)) was introduced in the House of Representatives in mid-January and was quickly [passed](#) by the House Natural Resources Committee. The bill has 33 House cosponsors and would codify a previous interpretation of “take” under the [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#) to also include incidental take of species. In 2017, the Department of the Interior's solicitor general [ruled](#) that only intentional killing or harming of birds qualifies as take, upending the Department's long-standing interpretation and enforcement of the law. TWS has signed onto a [letter](#) in support of the MBPA.

Organization units can also sign this [letter](#) to show their support. Signatures are currently being accepted on a rolling basis. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

CAC Activities

Alaska Chapter submits comments on Ambler Road Project – The [Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted [public comments](#) on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Ambler Road Project on October 24, 2019. The Chapter expressed their appreciation for the attention to analyzing the potential benefits and impacts of the project, but also expressed several issues with the DEIS assumptions, including the life of the road, public road access, and segmentation of impacts assessment. The Chapter also had concerns regarding species- and environmental-specific issues, such as water quality and fisheries, birds, bats, caribou, and invasive species. *CAC Contact:* [Michael Spindler](#)

Minnesota Chapter submits letter on WMA timber harvest – The [Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) Forest Committee [submitted a letter](#) in early October 2019 to the Commissioner, Governor and others regarding the proposed excessive timber harvest on wildlife management areas. The Chapter expressed several concerns, including negative impacts on wildlife. *CAC Contact:* [Styron Bell](#)

Oregon Chapter engages on several pieces of legislation – The [Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted several letters regarding state legislation between October 2019 and January 2020:

- [January 14, 2020](#): Co-signed a letter of full support for the \$250 million in funding for the Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program included in the Senate version of the American Transportation Infrastructure Act.
- [January 10, 2020](#): Letter of Intent to Donate to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund. This fund is instrumental in setting up a mechanism to match funding from Recovering America's Wildlife Act when it is passed at the federal level.
- [December 10, 2019](#): Letter in strong support for ODFW's 2019 Climate and Ocean Change Policy Draft with small suggestions for improvement.
- [November 25, 2019](#): Comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Tri-state Fuel Breaks project.
- October 11, 2019: Letter in support of the proposed rule-making regarding the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee with a small word change requiring members to "live in and possess demonstrable expertise related to each of the ecoregions described below, which are documented and described in the Oregon Conservation Strategy".

CAC Contacts: [Leland Brown](#) and [Meghan Martin](#)

Wyoming Chapter requests co-sponsor of RAWA – The [Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) requested that Representative Liz Cheney [co-sponsor](#) Recovering America's Wildlife Act ([H.R. 3742](#)) on January 7. If your unit is interested in sending a letter in support of the bill, you can find a TWS form letter to use [here](#).

CAC Contact: [Tony Mong](#)

Wyoming Chapter sends letter on migration corridors – The [Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) sent [a letter](#) to the Wyoming Legislative Service Office on October 22, 2019 regarding the "Designation of migration corridors" bill that was being considered by the Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee. The Chapter does not support the proposed designation process because the bill doesn't

require use of the best-available science, incorporate feedback from all stakeholder groups, or leverage the efforts of Governor Gordon's advisory group on migration.

CAC Contact: [Tony Mong](#)

Federal Updates

Administration seeks NEPA changes – The Trump Administration [proposed](#) changes to the [National Environmental Policy Act's](#) guidance language in efforts stated to make NEPA reviews more efficient, effective, and timely. The new rules would modify the use of categorical exclusions and eliminate the need to perform environmental analyses prior to projects lacking “major federal action.” The proposals also establish time limits for environmental assessments (one year) and environmental impact statement (two years) plus a 150-page limit on environmental impact statement documents.

Additionally, the new rules define and eliminate language to effectively exclude from NEPA any analysis of a project's future climate change impacts. The rules cannot be finalized until after the [public comment period](#), currently scheduled to end March 10.

[Members of Congress](#) along with several [organizations](#) have asked for an extended comment period given the scope of the proposed changes, though the Administration may not heed such requests. Staff Contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)

Conflicting ESA bills appear in Congress – This month, the House of Representative's [Western Caucus](#) announced a [17-bill package](#) aimed at “modernizing the Endangered Species Act.” [Several bills](#) would codify the Trump Administration's August 2019 [rule changes](#) to the [Endangered Species Act](#), including those that allowed vetting of economic impacts in listing decisions, removed default “take” protections for threatened species, and changed the critical habitat designation process. Other bills in the package propose different changes to the ESA, such as codifying safe harbor agreements, removing deadlines for listing petition review, and prohibiting listing of foreign species. Meanwhile, the Democratically-backed “Protecting America's Wildlife and Fish in Need of Conservation Act” ([S.2491](#)/ [H.R. 4348](#)) has been introduced in the Senate and House in an attempt to roll back the 2019 ESA regulatory revisions. The bill advanced out of the House Natural Resources Committee and was reported to the House on January 29. The bill has 98 cosponsors in the House and 19 cosponsors in the Senate, but is unlikely to gain bicameral traction in this divided Congress. Staff Contact: [Caroline Murphy](#)

Committee approves wildlife corridors bills – Also reported out of committee and to the full House on Jan. 29 were the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act ([H.R.2795](#)) and the [Tribal Wildlife Corridors Act](#) ([H.R. 5179](#)). Each has also been introduced to the Senate. The [Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act](#) has been introduced in previous congresses and currently has 10 House cosponsors. It would allow for official designation of wildlife corridors on federal and tribal lands into a National Wildlife Corridor System. It would also create a public database of national corridors and provide funds to states for projects that maintain natural wildlife movements. New in this

Congress and mirroring the language of the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act, the [Tribal Wildlife Corridors Act](#) would allow tribes to apply to designate wildlife corridors on tribal land. *Staff Contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

CAC Activity and Contact Updates

Policy consultation – Do you want assistance with a wildlife conservation policy issue? Curious as to the various ways your organization unit can support federal efforts by TWS or engage on local level issues? Contact policy@wildlife.org.

Activity updates, success stories, and CAC Contact information – Does your CAC have a success story to tell? Is a new partnership developing at your organization unit? Do you have a new CAC Chair? Send it in! Let the CAN hear about it and help you in your work. Email Mariah Simmons at MSimmons@wildlife.org.