



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

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## Engagement Opportunities

**Welcome members of the 118th Congress** – For any units interested in connecting with their newly-elected or returning members of the U.S. Congress, TWS staff is available to help craft and distribute welcome letters. Welcome letters are a great way to introduce your unit to congressional staff in your geographic region. Once committee assignments for the new Congress have been made, outreach to members of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and new appropriators in the House and Senate will be especially valuable. Please reach out to Kelly if your unit is interested in engaging. We will keep units updated as committee assignments are made public. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

## CAC Activities

**Thank you to all TWS units and members for your support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act** – Although the [Recovering America's Wildlife Act \(H.R. 2773/S. 2372\)](#) was ultimately [left out of the omnibus spending bill at the end of 2022](#), it is important to recognize the time and effort that TWS members and units dedicated to supporting this legislation throughout the last year in the form of meetings, phone calls, emails, and formal letters of support to their members of Congress. It is thanks to these efforts that the bill was able to progress so far during the last Congress. We look forward to providing additional resources and opportunities to support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and funding for wildlife conservation throughout 2023. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

**CAN leadership opportunity in TWS Northeast Section** – The [Northeast Section of The Wildlife Society](#) continues to seek a member interested in serving as the Section's Conservation Affairs Committee Chair. Section Chairs communicate policy engagement activities and issues of interest from across the section's jurisdiction to the section's board, provide coordination and support to chapter CACs, and meet every other month with TWS staff and other section CAC chairs to coordinate on regional and national policy issues. Please reach out to Kelly if you have any questions about this role. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

## Federal Updates

**TWS submits comments on bald and golden eagle permitting** – In conjunction with the [Renewable Energy Working Group](#), The Wildlife Society recently submitted [comments](#) on proposed [rule changes](#) to the implementation of permitting under the [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#). The proposal aims to increase participation in the permitting process by creating a general permitting program for activities such as wind energy development and power line

operations. As part of the comments, TWS suggested the drafting of guidance that considers additional appropriate mitigation activities, particularly for at-risk golden eagle populations. TWS also suggested a standard operating procedure for preference in data set utilization that incorporates state, tribal, and local data. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

**Congress approves FY 2023 Appropriations** – In late December Congress passed the FY 2023 appropriations package, which includes funding levels for the Department of Agriculture and Interior. Under the bill, programs advocated for by TWS saw [minor increases](#). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received \$73.8 million for the implementation of the [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program](#), \$2 million above FY 2022 levels. Meanwhile, the [National Wildlife Refuge System](#) saw a minimal increase of \$22 million, totaling \$541.6 million. The U.S. Geological Survey received \$28 million for its Cooperative Research Units program and \$83 million for the Climate Adaptation Sciences Centers. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

**Biden administration finalizes WOTUS rule** – The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers announced in December a [final rule](#) providing a new definition for “[Waters of the United States](#)”. A revision to the Clean Water Act, the definition resembles one used pre-2015 with updates to reflect recent Supreme Court decisions and updated science. The rulemaking grants federal protections to large waterways, such as lakes, rivers, and streams as well as the wetlands adjacent to them. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

## Updates from Headquarters

**TWS endorses grasslands conservation effort** – The Wildlife Society recently [joined](#) partners in endorsing the [North American Grasslands Conservation Act](#), legislation introduced last Congress that seeks to establish a North American grasslands conservation strategy for protecting and restoring threatened grassland and sagebrush ecosystems. A grant program would support the management efforts needed for this restoration by funding projects to improve and restore grasslands, support habitat connectivity and enhance biodiversity. TWS will be working with partners to push this legislation forward in the new Congress. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

**TWS Council Policy Priorities Committee** – The Wildlife Society’s Policy Priorities Committee on TWS Council met recently to discuss policy issues TWS should engage on in the coming two years. More information on the finalization of the priorities will be released in the upcoming weeks. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O’Connor](#)

**Joe Burns Memorial Wildlife Policy Internship transition** – TWS headquarters is happy to share that our new Joe Burns Memorial Wildlife Policy Intern, Brandy Wible, began work with us on January 9. Brandy is finishing up her graduate work at UNC Wilmington, where she studies the efficacy of different sampling techniques for the pygmy rattlesnake. She also serves as the current president of the UNCW Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Early this year, TWS staff also said our goodbyes to Madi Chudzik, TWS’ outgoing Fall 2022 intern. Thank you Madi for all of your hard work!

## **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 Kelly O'Connor at [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@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 Kelly O'Connor at [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org).