



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

July 2023, Volume 9, Issue 7

The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network supports communication, collaboration, and coordination on policy engagement across our organization and participating chapters, sections, working groups, and student chapters. The monthly CAN Newsletter highlights policy issues occurring at local, regional, and national levels, and provides opportunities for wildlife professionals and students to engage with those issues.

On the Horizon

Request for input on ESA rulemaking – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service recently [proposed](#) changes to a suite of regulations implementing the [Endangered Species Act](#). The affected regulations include those dealing with [interagency consultation](#), [listing and delisting](#), and [take protections for threatened species](#). This suite of proposed rulemaking aims to reopen and rescind several revisions to ESA regulations finalized in the [previous Administration](#). TWS staff is digging through the proposals, and will be soliciting feedback from TWS units later this month. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

CAC Activities

Nevada Chapter submits testimony to National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board – [The Nevada Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted [testimony](#) to the [National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board](#) (hereafter the Board) in advance of its June 2023 meeting. The Chapter's testimony focused on current and future impacts of overabundant horses and burros on both the habitats and native wildlife of Nevada. The testimony supports increasing the rate of gathers on herds, followed by the application of fertility treatments, until Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) can be achieved in the state. The Chapter also voiced support for adequate funds for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to implement these strategies on BLM lands. This testimony provides critical local expertise in the management of Nevada's wildlife to the Board, and supplements the testimony submitted to the Board by The Wildlife Society (read more about this testimony in the Federal Updates section of this newsletter). *CAC contact:* [Cody Schroeder](#)

Tennessee Chapter publishes new position statement on timber harvest to increase quail habitat – Members of the [Tennessee Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) voted to finalize a new [position statement](#) on the positive impacts of timber harvest on populations of the northern bobwhite in Tennessee and more broadly across its range. The position statement supports the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency's (TWRA) recent proposal to harvest planted loblolly pine from an estimated 250 acres of the Bridgestone-Firestone Wildlife Management Area (WMA) as part of ongoing efforts to restore northern bobwhite and their habitat in the state. In the position statement, the Chapter also emphasizes the scientific support for timber management as a tool for creating early successional plant communities on the landscape. *Chapter contact:* [Erin Patrick](#)

Increasing the Society's effectiveness through communication and collaboration

Arkansas Chapter leads outreach efforts with Representative Hill's office to support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act – The [Arkansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) recently wrote a [letter to Representative French Hill](#) thanking him for his ongoing support for wildlife conservation and wildlife professionals in the state. Representative Hill was a cosponsor of the [Recovering America's Wildlife Act](#) during the last session of Congress, and the Chapter emphasized the importance of his support for the legislation once it is introduced to the current Congress. For more information on the current status of RAWA, see the Federal Updates section of this newsletter. *CAC contact:* [Virginia Rolland](#)

Federal Updates

TWS comments on NSF's Procedures Guide revisions –The Wildlife Society, with the support of TWS' [Native Peoples' Wildlife Management Working Group](#) (NPWMWG), recently submitted [comments](#) on the National Science Foundation's revisions to its [Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG). TWS expressed overall support for NSF's efforts to better account for impacts on tribal communities and peoples in the revisions proposed. Additionally, TWS recommended that NSF consider how processes outlined in the PAPPG will interact with the resources currently available to Tribal nations for engaging with and reviewing research proposals and funding opportunities. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

TWS comments on BLM land use rule – The Wildlife Society recently commented on the Bureau of Land Management's proposed rulemaking on [Conservation and Landscape Health](#). The proposed regulations aim to address land health and resiliency across BLM-managed lands by, in part, proposing a tool known as a conservation lease. These leases would allow third parties to perform restoration, conservation and mitigation activities on BLM lands. In the comments provided, TWS, with the support of TWS' [Rangeland Wildlife Working Group](#) and input from TWS' [Habitat Restoration and Conservation Working Group](#), commended the proposed rule, and emphasized the need for adequate resources to ensure BLM staff can implement and monitor the deployment and use of conservation leases. TWS also signed onto a set of supportive [comments](#) led by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and endorsed by TWS. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

TWS provides testimony for the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Committee Annual Meeting – TWS Western Section Council Representative Jim Sedinger recently provided testimony on behalf of TWS during a meeting of the [National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board](#) in Reno, NV. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board is a federal advisory committee that provides recommendations to the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management on managing free-roaming horses and burros on federal rangelands. In the testimony provided, Council Rep. Sedinger highlighted the need for immediate action to remove overpopulated horses and burros from western rangelands in order for the agencies to better meet the resource needs of native wildlife. This supplemented the [written testimony](#) submitted by TWS to the Advisory Board in advance of the meeting. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

Recovering America's Wildlife Act continues to see progress in Congress – The Recovering America's Wildlife Act ([S. 1149](#)) is receiving growing support in the form of additional cosponsors in the U.S. Senate. The bill currently has 15 bipartisan [cosponsors](#), and a number of additional Senators have already expressed their commitment to becoming cosponsors in the near future. In the U.S. House of Representatives, members of the House Committee on Natural Resources are working across the aisle to draft an updated version of the legislation for this session of Congress. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

Movement, though little bipartisan traction, as appropriations discussions take shape – House and Senate appropriators have begun releasing text for some of the [12 appropriations bills](#) to fund the federal government starting on October 1. Late last month, both the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees [passed](#) separate versions of the Department of Agriculture funding bill. The House version of the bill would eliminate funding for equity initiatives and climate change programs within the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and it would decrease funding for that agency by \$29.7 million from the current year, for a total of \$911.4 million.

Legislative funding proposals for the Department of the Interior are also starting to take shape, with the House recently [announcing](#) their plans to hold an Appropriations subcommittee hearing on their yet-to-be-released DOI funding proposal this Thursday, July 13. With House appropriators releasing proposals below the marks agreed to in the June 2023 debt ceiling deal, TWS expects the House's DOI proposal to include several cuts to federal conservation programs. TWS staff will keep members informed as we learn more. *Staff contact:* [Caroline Murphy](#)

Updates from Headquarters

Joe Burns Memorial Wildlife Policy Internship transition – TWS staff recently said our goodbyes to Brandy Wible, our Spring 2023 policy intern. Many thanks to Brandy for all of her great work during her internship! We're pleased to welcome our Fall 2023 policy intern Tom Klein, who began his internship on July 11. Tom is joining the TWS policy team from Colorado, where he recently completed a position with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department.

Policy engagement opportunities at TWS' 30th annual conference – [Registration is open](#) for TWS' 30th annual conference, November 5-9 in Louisville, Kentucky. Members interested in wildlife conservation policy and strategies for policy engagement can take advantage of several opportunities during the conference. TWS staff and staff from Backcountry Hunters and Anglers are collaborating to offer the workshop "Using Your Voice: Policy Engagement Through the Lens of a Wildlifer", which will cover information on relevant legislative and regulatory processes and provide hands-on training on how to engage with decision makers (pre-registration for the workshop is required). This year's conference will also feature a Conservation Affairs Network symposium highlighting some of the critical wildlife policy engagement activities being led by participants in the CAN. We hope to see you in Louisville!

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.

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.