



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

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

Engagement Opportunities

Proposed revisions to several sections of the U.S. Endangered Species Act – Earlier this month TWS staff sent CAN participants an [informational brief](#) on a package of proposed Endangered Species Act (ESA) revisions. These revisions largely rescind changes to the ESA finalized in [2019](#), which TWS stated concerns with and provided [recommendations](#) in response to. TWS is not requesting detailed feedback from members at this time due to our prior engagement with the 2019 rulemaking package, but any members with questions on the revisions proposed or an interest in submitting comments to the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the unit level can reach out to Kelly for assistance. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

Continued support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) needed during August congressional recess – While discussions continue surrounding the House's version of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, there are several opportunities for TWS members and units to connect with their Senators in support of positive Senate floor deliberations later this year. For units interested in engagement:

- If your Senator(s) have **already signed-on** as [cosponsors](#), consider sending them a thank-you letter using this [TWS template](#). If you don't see your Senator(s) on the official cosponsor roster, check their level of support on this [targeting spreadsheet](#); many Democratic Senators have already committed to cosponsoring the legislation once additional Republican cosponsors are identified. Any Democratic offices listed as officially supportive should be sent a thank you letter.
- If your Senator(s) **have not already cosponsored** the legislation or indicated their commitment to supporting the bill, you can request their cosponsorship using this [TWS template letter](#).
- You can use TWS' updated [social media guidance](#) to post about the current version of the legislation on your unit's social media accounts.

For TWS member engagement:

- Share this [phone call script](#) with unit members and encourage them to call their senators to request cosponsorship of the bill (or thank any senators who have [cosponsored](#) the legislation).
- Encourage members to write to their Senators directly using this [Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife action center](#).

Staff contact: [Kelly O'Connor](#)

On the Horizon

Revised WOTUS definition set for Office of Management and Budget review – The EPA and Army Corps of Engineers have revised the definition of “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) under the Clean Water Act following the *Sackett v. EPA* Supreme Court ruling. The SCOTUS ruling limited federal jurisdiction of wetlands, conflicting with the Biden Administration’s current WOTUS definition. The new draft definition is currently at the White House under review by the Office of Management and Budget, and we expect the proposal to be released to the public sometime this fall. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O’Connor](#)

CAC Activities

Save the date: CAN virtual meeting this fall – TWS staff will be hosting a virtual meeting of the Conservation Affairs Network open to all CAC Chairs and Section/Chapter officers on **September 19 from 3-4:30 pm ET**. This meeting will provide opportunities to discuss policy engagement and current issues in wildlife policy with CAN participants across the network as well as TWS staff. Keep an eye out for an invitation and request to provide feedback on breakout session topics in the next week. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O’Connor](#)

Federal Updates

TWS hosts congressional briefing to support the National Wildlife Refuge System – The Wildlife Society and other member organizations in the [Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement \(CARE\)](#) hosted a June 2023 [congressional briefing](#) highlighting the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). Panelists provided audience members with an overview of the Refuge System, including the conservation mission of Refuges, Refuge System resource challenges and opportunities, and the role Congress has in supporting the NWRS around the country. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O’Connor](#)

USFWS finalizes ESA experimental population rule – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has [finalized rulemaking](#) pertaining to [ESA section 10\(j\)](#), allowing the agency to introduce experimental populations of threatened and endangered species outside their historical ranges. The changes to previous rule language aim to aid recovery efforts for species facing a lack of habitat in their historical range resulting from the compounding effects of climate change and invasive species. TWS expressed support for this rule change through [comments](#) submitted last year on the proposed rulemaking, which were informed by feedback from the CAN and TWS working groups. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O’Connor](#)

House and Senate Appropriations updates – In July, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees each [passed](#) versions of the Department of the Interior Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations package. The House’s package proposes approximately \$25.4 billion in funding for FY 2024, while the Senate package proposes \$42.8 billion. TWS submitted written testimony earlier this year to both the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Subcommittees on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies with requested increases in funding for USFWS, USGS and BLM programs in FY 2024. You can follow along with the program-specific funding

proposals out of the House and Senate on TWS' [website](#). With drastically different bills in play, the House and Senate have a lot of work to do to reach a consensus before the new fiscal year begins on October 1. In the likely event that Congress is unable to reach an agreement before the end of September, a continuing resolution will be needed to keep the federal government open. *Staff contact: [Kelly O'Connor](#)*

Updates from Headquarters

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!

Government Relations Manager Murphy wraps up time at TWS – TWS' Government Relations Manager Caroline Murphy wrapped up her tenure with The Wildlife Society headquarters team in early August. Murphy has been working with TWS and the Conservation Affairs Network in various capacities since she began at TWS in 2015. Caroline wants to thank CAN members for their engagement and partnership with her and the TWS policy program over the past several years.

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.