



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

September 2023, Volume 9, Issue 9

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

Welcome Senators back from the August congressional recess with messages of support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act – The U.S. Senate returned from recess on September 5th. TWS members and units can continue to reach out to their Senators in support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) to help ensure 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](#).

Keep an eye out for additional opportunities to engage with the U.S. House of Representatives on RAWA in the near future!

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

On the Horizon

TWS and partners prepare to celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week this fall – TWS and other participating organizations in the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) Coalition will be assisting in hosting the National Wildlife Refuge Expo at the Capitol in DC this November. Leaders from the US Fish and Wildlife Service will join co-chairs of the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus to speak to the importance of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Information will be provided to CACs on how to invite members of their

Increasing the Society's effectiveness through communication and collaboration

congressional delegation to participate in the event in the coming months. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

CAC Activities

Nevada Chapter joins partners to engage with BLM on wild horse and burro management

– The [Nevada Chapter of the Wildlife Society](#) joined with organizations including the National Wildlife Federation, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Ellison Ranching Co., Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation, and Nevada Wildlife Federation to voice support for a Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) project submission to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Nevada State Office which would support the removal of approximately 10,000 horses in priority habitat areas in the state. In a [letter to BLM Director Stone-Manning](#), participating organizations noted the need for targeted management of wild horse populations in the state, where the current estimated population of horses and burros is roughly 300% over Appropriate Management Level (AML). The project, titled "Wild Horse and Burro Gathers in Core Sage Grouse and Lahontan Cutthroat Habitats", would address management concerns including habitat restoration, pathogen transmission between domestic and bighorn sheep, and other ecological impacts caused by wild horses in Nevada. *CAC contact:* [Cody Schroeder](#)

Register for the CAN virtual meeting on September 19 – CAC members and Section/Chapter officers are encouraged to participate in an upcoming virtual Conservation Affairs Network meeting on September 19 from 3-4:30 pm ET. Interested participants who have not already done so can suggest relevant topics for breakout discussions during the meeting using [this form](#) until September 5th. Participants can now register to receive Zoom access for the meeting [here](#). An agenda for the meeting will be distributed to participants in early September. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

Federal Updates

TWS supports USFWS rulemaking affecting Endangered Species Act implementation –

The Wildlife Society submitted [comments](#) to the US Fish and Wildlife Service [supporting](#) proposed changes to regulations implementing the [Endangered Species Act](#), including regulatory language that pertains to economic considerations when listing species, designating critical habitat, and protections for threatened species. TWS' comments built on [prior engagement](#) with this suite of regulations during rulemaking in 2019. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

Work continues on the 2023 Farm Bill – The current Farm Bill expires September 30th, and lawmakers have stated that the 2023 Farm Bill will not be ready before that deadline. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, has stated that the 2023 bill should be completed before the end of the year, preventing an extension of the 2018 Farm Bill from being necessary. The House Committee on Agriculture has relayed that they would like to have a bill ready for markup in September, but bringing a bill to the House floor will be a challenge with limited floor time until late December. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

USDA APHIS to host final Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program listening session later this month – The US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will be hosting the last in a series of virtual listening sessions focused on standards for its Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Herd Certification Program (HCP). TWS and several TWS chapters have engaged with prior rulemaking to revise CWD HCP standards. The final listening session is scheduled for September 14th; interested participants must [register by September 7th](#). *Staff contact: [Kelly O’Connor](#)*

TWS signs on to comments on BLM rulemaking related to renewable energy development on public lands – The Wildlife Society joined with partners to provide [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on recent [rulemaking](#) pertaining to rights-of-way, leasing, and operations for renewable energy on public lands. The comments provided detailed proposals for avoiding impacts to lands and waters, fish and wildlife habitat, cultural and indigenous resources, and recreational opportunities when siting and planning new solar and wind development projects. *Staff contact: [Kelly O’Connor](#)*

Final rulemaking revising definition of WOTUS released – The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) released [final rule language](#) which revises the definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) and significantly scales back the Biden administration’s earlier rule governing this definition. This rule change will remove federal protections from an estimated 63% of wetland acreage in the U.S. The rule comes off of the Supreme Court decision [Sackett v. EPA](#), which decided that the federal government has no jurisdiction over wetlands that do not have a continuous surface connection with a navigable water source. Litigation over WOTUS and wetlands protections is expected to continue from environmental organizations and industry. *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!

TWS soliciting applications for *Journal of Wildlife Management* Editor-in-Chief – TWS is currently soliciting applications for the position of Editor-in-Chief for the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. A detailed position announcement with instructions on how to apply can be found [here](#). Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Interested candidates may contact [Evelyn Merrill](#), Chair of TWS’ Publications Committee, for more information.

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.