



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

December 2023, Volume 9, Issue 12

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

Upcoming Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting – [The board](#) will convene in Phoenix Arizona December 12-14. [The meeting](#) is open to the public and is a good [opportunity](#) for engagement. In-person or virtual oral testimony as well as written public comments are being accepted. To provide public comment, you can register up to an hour before the allotted time on-site. To provide public comment at the meeting over Zoom use these links to register before December 8th:

- [Dec. 13, 2023, 10:15 am - 11:15 am](#)
- [Dec. 14, 2023, 3 pm - 4 pm](#)

To provide written comments, email them to BLM_WO_Advisory_Board_Comments@blm.gov at least three days prior to the meeting, and they will relay the comments to the council for review during the meeting time. Additional resources for TWS member engagement:

- [TWS Issue Statement on Feral Horses and Burros in North America](#)
- [TWS Position Statement on Wildlife Fertility Control](#)
- [TWS Wild Horse and Burro Testimony from 2022](#)

Staff Contact: Policy@wildlife.org

Remind members of Congress to support dedicated funding to conserve at-risk wildlife – The Recovering America's Wildlife Act ([S. 1149](#)) needs more cosponsors to help build momentum toward time on the Senate floor. Any new or reinforced support is beneficial, and outreach to Republican offices is especially valuable at this time.

- 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](#); for Democratic Senators who have already committed to cosponsoring the legislation, consider sending a letter of thanks for their support.
- 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.

Increasing the Society's effectiveness through communication and collaboration

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](#).

Although we're waiting on bill text in the House, touches to House Republicans to emphasize the importance of this legislation are warranted and valuable. TWS policy staff is available to assist with outreach to House offices. *Staff contact:* Policy@wildlife.org

CAC Activities

Alaska Chapter submitted comment on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas drilling project on the coastal plain– [The Alaska Chapter](#) of The Wildlife Society submitted [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on the Coastal Plain Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program. Comments from the Chapter focused on opposing oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain of [the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#), as well as identifying specific concerns for the draft SEIS. CAC Contact: [Cyndi Wardlow](#)

Thank you CAN panelists and attendees at the 2023 annual conference in Louisville – The Wildlife Society's Government Affairs team hosted a Conservation Affairs Network Symposium on the final day of the annual conference this year in Louisville. Our speakers – Bob Newman, Kyle Smelter, Kelly Holland and John Kinsey - gave informative presentations and sat for an engaging panel. Our CAN presenters gave talks about unit engagement with state legislatures, Student Chapter Engagement with the CAN, science-based decision making from a section perspective, and navigating mountain lion management policies in Texas. For any feedback, please reach out to Policy@wildlife.org

TWS and other member organizations in the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) hosted the National Wildlife Refuge Expo – The event, hosted in Washington, D.C., highlighted the value of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as well as featured interactive exhibits. Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), Rep. Gabe Vasquez (D-TX), and Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA) spoke at the event. The Director of the USFWS Martha Williams, NWRS Chief Cynthia Martinez, and NWRA President Geoff Haskett also gave remarks at the expo. TWS will continue to engage with the CARE coalition to advocate for increased appropriations for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Staff Contact: Policy@wildlife.org

Federal Updates

Government Shutdown Averted – Congress passed, and the President signed, a bipartisan, laddered continuing resolution that funds the government for an additional two months. The first part of the laddered CR funds Military Construction-Veterans Affairs, Agriculture-Rural

Development, Energy-Water and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development bills through January 19. The remaining eight appropriations bills including the interior-environment bill were funded through February 2. The 2018 Farm Bill (which expired on September 30) was extended through September 2024. Senators have been telling reporters they will likely need an entire extra year to fully draft the 2024 Farm Bill. *Staff Contact:* Policy@wildlife.org

TWS supports funding for big game wildlife migration corridors – TWS joined with other members of the [American Wildlife Conservation Partners \(AWCP\)](#) to sign a [letter](#) supporting fiscal year 2025 funding of the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to maintain, conserve, and enhance wildlife migration corridors. The letter cites the importance of continued funding for big game wildlife migration corridors which facilitate unobstructed movement for wildlife, contribute to overall habitat resiliency, and contribute to larger-scale efforts to increase connectivity for other species. An overarching message of the requests to the Council on Environmental Quality and Office of Management and Budget was ensuring agency coordination throughout the development and implementation of these projects. *Staff Contact:* Policy@wildlife.org

The Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council is meeting in Washington, D.C. – [The Council](#) is [meeting](#) at the DOI headquarters to discuss wildlife conservation and hunting policies, hear briefings from Federal agency staff, and reports from Council subcommittees. The HWCC will also hear public comment. The final agenda is available [here](#). The Wildlife Society's CEO Ed Arnett serves as an alternate member on the council, representing wildlife & habitat conservation/management organizations. *Staff Contact:* Policy@wildlife.org

The USFWS phases out lead ammunition at eight national wildlife refuges – [The final rule](#) will phase out lead ammunition in the fall of 2026 at Blackwater, Chincoteague, Eastern Neck, Erie, Great Thicket, Patuxent Research, Rachel Carson and Wallops Island National Wildlife refuges. This final rule comes after the public was given two 60-day comment periods to express concerns about phasing out lead ammunition; the final amount of comments received on the matter surpassed 18,500. The Wildlife Society [supports](#) educational efforts, policies and regulations by fish and wildlife agencies that reduce wildlife exposure to lead from hunting ammunition and fishing tackle. The agency's final rule will also expand archery deer hunting at the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge, and Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. *Staff Contact:* Policy@wildlife.org

Updates from Headquarters

TWS Council updates Position and Issue Statements – TWS' Council approved updates to several TWS policy documents at its meeting in November. Council approved an updated Position Statement on the [Conservation of Biological Diversity](#), a new issue Statement on [The U.S Endangered Species Act](#), updating a prior document, and a new Issue Statement on [Conservation Policy For At-Risk Species in Canada](#). TWS periodically reviews our position statements and the next statements up for review in consideration by TWS Council are the [Animal Rights and Philosophy](#) Position Statement, [Hunting](#) Position Statement, [Responsible](#)

[Human Use of Wildlife](#) Position Statement, and [The North American Model For Wildlife Conservation](#) Position Statement. *Staff Contact:* Policy@wildlife.org

CAN communications and TWS policy assistance through January – Please note that Kelly O’Connor will be on extended leave through the end of January. CAC contacts and other members requiring assistance with CAN business and other policy engagement needs can reach out to TWS policy staff at Policy@wildlife.org during this time.

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 policy@wildlife.org.