



# 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

**Urge your representative in the House to join the bipartisan Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus** – The Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus was recently registered in the House of Representatives by Congressman Mike Thompson (CA). The Caucus has 7 co-chairs and currently has 39 total members. Participation in the Caucus offers representatives an avenue for promoting beneficial legislation to address the challenges facing the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System.

- If your representative is already a member of the caucus, consider sending them a thank you letter using this [TWS template](#).
- If your representative has not already joined the caucus, you can use this [TWS template](#) to request their consideration.

Staff contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@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 Senators have **already signed-on** as [cosponsors](#), consider sending them a thank-you letter using this [TWS template](#). If you don't see one of your Senator(s) on the official cosponsor roster, check their level of support on this [targeting spreadsheet](#); some Democratic Senators have already committed to cosponsoring the legislation once more Republicans have signed on; if that is the case, 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.

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 to thank any Senators who have [cosponsored](#) the legislation.

*Increasing the Society's effectiveness through communication and collaboration*

- 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:* [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)

## CAC Activities

**Florida Chapter meets with Senator Rubio's office to urge support for RAWA** – Members of [The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) along with TWS staff organized and met with Senator Rubio's office to discuss the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. The group, also joined by the [Florida Wildlife Federation](#) and University of Florida wildlife ecology and conservation staff, discussed the legislation's potential to provide jobs, increase economic output, prevent listing of 690 declining species in Florida, and tackle Florida's invasive species crisis. To conclude the meeting, Senator Rubio's cosponsorship of the bill was requested. Fifteen days after TWS's Florida coalition met with Senator Rubio's office, he officially came on as a cosponsor for The Recovering America's Wildlife Act. The Florida Chapter has since sent Senator Rubio's office a [thank you letter](#). *CAC contact:* [Jay Exum](#)

**Wyoming Chapter submits comments to BLM's Rock Springs field office** – [The Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society's](#) Science Committee submitted comments on the Bureau of Land Management's Rock Springs Field Office draft resource management plan. The Science Committee recommended considerations supported by scientific literature relating to oil and gas development, big game management, wind and solar development, and impacts to raptors from wind energy development. [The letter](#) also recommends including data from the specified literature in the draft plan to best serve wildlife and wildlife habitat in southwest Wyoming. *CAC contact:* [Rhiannon Jakopak](#)

**Arkansas Chapter urges members of Congress to join the bipartisan Refuge Caucus** – [The Arkansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) sent letters to representatives [Crawford](#), [Hill](#) and [Womack](#), encouraging them to join the bipartisan Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus. The Arkansas Chapter also sent a [letter](#) to representative Westerman thanking him for joining the Caucus which seeks to protect and enhance the National Wildlife Refuge System. *CAC contact:* [Virginie Rolland](#)

**Oregon Chapter supports state legislature wildlife bill** – [The Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) joined a coalition of 17 other organizations in support of Oregon's state legislature [House Bill 4148](#). HB 4148 appropriates state funds for wildlife disease mitigation, invasive species management, wildlife rehabilitation, and habitat connectivity/wildlife corridors. The legislation would also direct the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to establish a wildlife coexistence program. *CAC contact:* [Jim Greer](#)

## Federal Updates

**TWS signs on to migratory bird budget** – The Wildlife Society has joined a coalition of conservation organizations endorsing [a letter](#) to Martha Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Shalanda Young, Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The letter expresses support for enhanced funding for the [Migratory Bird Program](#) within the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request. Furthermore, the organizations advocate for increased funding for various elements of the Migratory Bird Program, such as conservation and monitoring, permitting, the Federal Duck Stamp program, North American Waterfowl Management, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. *Staff contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)*

**Government shutdown averted** – Congress passed a [bill](#) to avert a partial government shutdown before the impending deadline, ensuring funding for the federal government continues until March 1 and March 8. The Senate, led by Democrats, voted 77-18 for final passage, followed by the Republican-led House with a vote of 314-108. This marks the third temporary federal funding measure since last September. The bill also extends funding deadlines to provide more time for crafting appropriations bills. *Staff contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)*

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife plans grizzly bear reintroduction in Montana and Idaho** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has [announced](#) its intention to conduct a comprehensive assessment regarding the potential reintroduction of grizzly bears to the Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE) in Montana and Idaho. The EIS aims to thoroughly explore various strategies for reintroduction, with one notable consideration being the designation of an experimental population of grizzlies under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. Virtual public [scoping meetings](#) will be conducted by the Service, inviting questions and feedback regarding the scope of issues and proposed alternatives. Interested parties have until March 18, 2024 to [submit comments](#). *Staff contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)*

**EXPLORE Act passes House Committee on Natural Resources** – Chair Bruce Westerman introduced the bipartisan "Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act" ([H.R. 6492](#)) on November 29, 2023. This legislation aims to improve recreational access on U.S. federal lands and waters by streamlining permitting processes, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting collaborative land management. It recently passed the House Committee on Natural Resources and is now being referred to subcommittees in the House Committee on Agriculture. *Staff contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)*

**BLM resumes large-scale wild horse roundups amid overpopulation concerns** – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has announced the [resumption of large-scale roundups](#) of wild horses and burros, with plans to remove approximately 18,770 animals from overcrowded federal rangelands in fiscal year 2024. This marks an increase from the [5,335 animals removed in the previous year](#). The agency emphasized the need to maintain a balance between wildlife conservation and ecological sustainability on public lands as part of the justification for planned roundups. *Staff contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)*

**Congress Introduces LAKES Act to boost outdoor recreation management** – [H.R. 6906](#), the Lake Access Keeping Economies Strong (LAKES) Act, led by Representatives Steve Womack, Bruce Westerman, and Jared Huffman has been introduced to the House of Representatives. The bill aims to allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to retain 80% of recreation fees collected onsite for operational expenses at managed outdoor recreation facilities. The proposed act seeks to enable better maintenance and development of recreational sites while supporting the outdoor recreation economy. *Staff contact:* [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)

## Updates from Headquarters

**TWS concludes nomination period for Vice President** – The Wildlife Society recently closed the nomination period for the position of Vice President. The person elected to this position will serve a four-year term (Year 1 Vice President, Year 2 President-elect, Year 3 President, Year 4 Immediate Past-President). Specific qualifications and a description of each of the four positions can be found [here](#). TWS' Nominating Committee will be reviewing all nominations that were submitted by the February 3rd deadline. Contact: [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)

**Nominations for TWS awards have begun** – The Wildlife Society's [Awards Program](#) annually honors professional excellence, recognizes outstanding achievement and highlights contributions to wildlife science and management. Nominators should refer to the individual awards to be sure they have the criteria needed for submission. [Nomination materials](#) for all awards, except Wildlife Publication Awards, must be submitted by May 1. Incomplete nomination packets will not be considered. Contact: [awards@wildlife.org](mailto:awards@wildlife.org)

## 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](mailto: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 [koconnor@wildlife.org](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)