



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

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

CAC Activities

Alabama Chapter meets with Senator Tuberville and Senator Britt's office to urge support for RAWA – Members of [The Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) along with TWS staff organized and met with Senator Tuberville and Senator Britt's office to discuss the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. The group was also joined by the Alabama Wildlife Federation, Alabama Audubon, and Auburn University wildlife ecology and conservation staff. The coalition led a discussion of the legislation's potential to increase economic output, prevent costs associated with listing of declining species in Alabama, and tackle Alabama's invasive species crisis. To conclude the meetings, Senators Britt and Tuberville were asked to cosponsor the bill. Senator Tuberville has since cosponsored the legislation, and Senator Britt's office provided positive feedback on the Chapter's engagement. *CAC contact:* [Ray Metzler](#)

Alaska Chapter submits comments on the Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act D1 lands EIS – [The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) recently submitted a [letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management regarding Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act (ANCSA) D1 lands. This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) assesses the potential impacts of opening lands subject to ANCSA 17(d)(1) Withdrawals, spanning the Bay, Bering Sea-Western Interior, East Alaska, Kobuk-Seward Peninsula, and Ring of Fire Planning areas in Alaska. The Revocation of existing ANCSA 17(d)(1) Withdrawals could potentially permit the acquisition of mining claims or applications for title under various public land laws, including mining laws. The Chapter's comments supported maintaining existing D1 Withdrawals, and spoke to concerns around habitat connectivity, impacts to wildlife like caribou, and other impacts to fisheries and aquatic ecosystems. *CAC Contact:* [Cyndi Wardlow](#)

Federal Updates

Hearing scheduled for Representative Westerman's American Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act – Congressman Bruce Westerman (R-AR) recently introduced the "American Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act" ([H.R. 7408](#)). The bill aims to allocate up to \$300 million annually over five fiscal years to support the implementation of state wildlife action plans ([SWAPs](#)), as well as reform the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A hearing for H.R. 7408 is scheduled for Wednesday, March 6, in the [House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries](#). TWS is finalizing testimony to the Subcommittee supporting the bill's intent to better fund the implementation of habitat conservation and restoration projects, while emphasizing that this legislation falls short of the need for the dedicated funding proposed in the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. TWS policy staff will distribute the final testimony to the CAN when it's available, and continue to monitor the legislation for member engagement opportunities. *Staff contact:* koconnor@wildlife.org

Fish and Wildlife Service proposes updates for National Wildlife Refuge System - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed new regulations and policy updates to maintain and enhance the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health (BIDEH) of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This [proposal](#) aims to address contemporary conservation challenges, including the impacts of climate change on refuge species and ecosystems. The proposed revisions impact management activities including predator control, conservation translocations, use of genetically engineered organisms, invasive species management, pesticide use, agricultural uses, and mosquito control. TWS is finalizing comments to the Service supporting the intent of the policy revisions and providing additional considerations for impacts to wildlife and wildlife professionals under the revised policy and new regulations. These comments are informed by the expertise of several TWS working groups, and will be distributed to the CAN following submission to USFWS. The Service has extended the deadline for members of the public to provide comments from March 4 to May 6, 2024. *Staff contact:* koconnor@wildlife.org

Draft BLM solar energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement available for public comment - The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has [released](#) the Draft Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public comment. This programmatic EIS updates the [2012 Western Solar Plan](#) and expands it to 5 additional states. Public input is sought to evaluate five action alternatives, each proposing different approaches to siting solar projects on public lands, detailed on the project [website](#). TWS is preparing to collaborate with relevant chapters and sections to prepare comments to the BLM. The BLM will host public meetings and accept comments until April 18, 2024. The BLM is also hosting a virtual listening session via Zoom scheduled for Friday, March 15, 2024, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern Time (registration link [here](#)). *Staff contact:* koconnor@wildlife.org

U.S. House passes WILD Reauthorization Act - The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver (WILD) Reauthorization Act ([H.R. 5009](#)), sponsored by Rep. Dave Joyce (R-OH), which would reauthorize funding for wildlife and habitat conservation programs. The Act supports initiatives such as the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, emphasizing domestic and global conservation initiatives. The Senate version ([S. 2395](#)) reflects similar bipartisan backing. *Staff contact:* koconnor@wildlife.org

SHARKED Act addressing shark depredation passes in the House - The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Supporting the Health of Aquatic Systems through Research, Knowledge, and Enhanced Dialogue (SHARKED) Act ([H.R. 4051](#)), sponsored by Representatives Rob Wittman (R-VA). The bill aims to address shark depredation, a growing concern for saltwater anglers, by directing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to create a task force to study the issue. If enacted, the SHARKED Act will help develop strategies to mitigate the impact of shark depredation on fishing catches, bait, gear, and fish survival. *Staff contact:* koconnor@wildlife.org

Updates from Headquarters

Call for proposals for TWS Annual Conference closes March 6 – Submit your proposal for symposia, panel discussions, and workshops for [TWS' 31st annual conference](#) by March 6. This year's conference will take place in Baltimore, MD from October 19-23.

TWS annual report available for Fiscal Year 2023 – You can view The Wildlife Society's Annual Report for FY23 [on our website](#). The report highlights the achievements of TWS' policy program, as well as the work of our other staff and program areas. Thank you to all of our members for helping make the last year such a successful one!

TWS Council meeting at the 2024 North American Fish and Wildlife Conference – TWS' Council will be meeting at the upcoming North American Fish and Wildlife Conference at the end of March. Staff will be engaging in the conference to represent TWS' voice in the wildlife conservation policy arena.

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 koconnor@wildlife.org