



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

Last call for input on TWS policy priorities – The opportunity to provide feedback during the current phase of TWS policy priority development will close tomorrow, **January 10, 2025**.

Please [use this form](#) to give your input on the relative importance of priority conservation policy areas identified based on member input received in phase 1 of this process. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

Save the date for TWS policy town hall – On **January 30, 2025**, CAC Chairs, Section and Chapter leaders, and Working Group Chairs are invited to participate in a town hall meeting focused on TWS' policy priorities and our society's engagement with conservation policy in 2025. The meeting will include a Q&A where participants can discuss TWS' policy engagement with staff. Formal invitation and draft agenda to follow. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

On the Horizon

Building relationships with new decision makers – The 119th Congress has officially convened. There will be many opportunities to develop relationships between new members and their constituents with expertise in wildlife conservation in 2025. As committee assignments for the new Congress are made, outreach to members of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and new appropriators in both chambers will be especially valuable. TWS staff will begin reaching out to CACs in the coming months to assist with writing letters of introduction and facilitating meet and greets with congressional offices. If your TWS unit has target offices that you'd like support engaging with, please reach out for assistance. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

CAC Activities

Leadership opportunity in Section Conservation Affairs Committee – The **Northwest Section** seeks a member interested in serving as Section Conservation Affairs Committee Chair. Section CAC Chairs communicate policy engagement activities and issues of interest from across the section's jurisdiction to the section's board, provide coordination and support to chapter CACs, and meet every other month with TWS staff and other section CAC Chairs to coordinate on regional and national policy issues. Please reach out to Kelly if you have any

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questions about this opportunity or are interested in serving as a Section Chair. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

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

Federal Updates

119th Congress convenes – January 3, 2025, marked the official beginning of the 119th United States Congress. TWS staff will be watching for legislative activity that falls within the scope of our society’s policy priorities and sharing engagement opportunities via the CAN. Consider joining our policy town hall (see “Engagement Opportunities” above) for more on what to expect from this Congress in the months ahead.

BLM finalizes Western Solar Plan, making 32 million acres of federal land available for solar projects – The BLM released its approved [Record of Decision for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development](#) in late December. The plan designates approximately 32 million acres of BLM lands across 11 western states as priority areas for utility-scale solar projects. Projects in these priority areas will be subject to a more streamlined permitting process. TWS [developed comments](#) on the draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the plan in collaboration with chapters, sections, and working groups earlier in 2024.

Refuge System receives \$500 million for disaster relief in end-of-year spending bill – Congress passed a Continuing Resolution on December 20, 2024, ([H.R. 10545](#)) extending federal spending through March 14, 2025 and designating over \$100 billion in supplemental funding for federal disaster relief programs. The supplemental relief package included \$500 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System, allowing this critical program to repair refuges that have been impacted by recent hurricanes, severe storms, and major flooding. This falls just short of the funding levels that TWS and other organizations [requested](#) but does not include additional funds requested to achieve nature-based solutions across the refuge system.

USFWS proposes to update grizzly bear listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act – The USFWS [announced](#) proposed rulemaking to revise its approach to grizzly bear recovery in the lower 48 states. Grizzly bears have been listed as threatened across the lower 48 states under the Endangered Species Act since 1975, including in areas that fall outside the historical range of the species. The proposed rulemaking would establish a single distinct population segment (DPS) where the species would maintain its threatened status in parts of Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming, and would remove ESA protections outside that DPS. The proposal includes rulemaking to address human-bear conflict management under Section 4(d) of the ESA. The USFWS will accept public comments on the proposed rulemaking for 60 days following publication in the Federal Register, which is anticipated shortly.

Questions on any items covered in this month’s Federal Updates can be sent to [Kelly O'Connor](#)

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Tools and Resources

TWS Position Statement on The North American Model and the Future of Wildlife Conservation – TWS’ Council approved a revised version of our society’s position on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation in late 2024. The final position statement is now available on wildlife.org. Thank you to the working groups who provided feedback during the review of this position statement.

Updates from Headquarters

TWS welcomes nominations for the position of vice president – You can now submit nominations for TWS vice president [using this form](#). The person elected to this position will serve a four-year term (year one vice president, year two president-elect, year three president, and year four immediate past president). Specific qualifications and a description for each position filled can be found [here](#). **Nominations are due by Friday, January 31, 2025.**

Dallas Safari Club Foundation awards TWS with 2025 Education Award – The Wildlife Society has been awarded the [Dallas Safari Club Foundation’s Education Award for 2025](#). The award recognizes TWS’ leadership in supporting the development and advancement of wildlife professionals throughout their careers. TWS will receive a \$10,000 grant from DCSF as part of the award.

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