



The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

February 2025, Volume 11, Issue 2

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.

TWS Conservation Affairs Network,

We're less than two months into 2025, yet this has already been a challenging year for wildlife professionals. Recent executive orders and other policies initiated by the Trump administration have led to confusion among the conservation community and uncertainty around issues like federal funding for conservation programs and staffing of the agencies charged with conserving wildlife and their habitats on federal lands. This serves as a strong reminder of the importance of using your voice to advocate for wildlife science and the work of wildlife professionals. Decision makers need to hear about the impacts of these actions on their constituents and the communities they serve.

In a recent message to TWS members, President Art Rogers and our CEO Ed Arnett noted TWS' continuing commitment to supporting our members through challenging and uncertain times. If your work as a wildlife professional is being impacted by administrative changes and policies, keeping TWS informed of your experiences will enable our organization to be more targeted and responsive in our advocacy efforts. TWS has been working closely with other professional societies and partner organizations to identify opportunities for engagement with the new administration. We have already submitted a letter to the Secretary of the Interior expressing the importance of wildlife professionals in managing public lands, and are working to craft messaging on this issue for the President. This correspondence will be added to the [policy library](#) as it's completed.

I encourage you to contact your elected officials and urge them to support conservation professionals in their states and districts. Recognizing that many of our members are in a position where they may not feel comfortable engaging with offices directly, I hope CACs will see this as an opportunity to engage on behalf of those individuals. Below are some resources to support your engagement and help you stay informed. If there are other resources you've found useful please let me know so I can share them with other CAN participants in future newsletters.

Thank you for the work you do not only to conserve wildlife but to support your fellow wildlife professionals.

Sincerely,

Kelly

Take Action

- [How to find and contact your members of Congress](#) (MOC)

Increasing the Society's effectiveness through communication and collaboration

- [Phone call script](#) tell your MOC to support conservation professionals (*This can be easily modified to mention specific programs/agencies or to address elected officials at the state or local level. You can also use this text in an email or letter if you prefer written correspondence with your MOC. Please reach out if you'd like help modifying this template or crafting letters to your MOC*)
- Interested in meeting with your MOC? Reach out to TWS staff for help scheduling office meetings

Tools and Resources

- TWS [Position Statement on the Use of Science in Policy and Management Decisions](#)
- TWS [Position Statement on Workforce Diversity in the Wildlife Profession](#)
- [USFWS press release](#) and [corresponding survey results](#) from the '22 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (*empowered wildlife professionals result in well-managed wildlife populations, a huge economic benefit to the country that you can emphasize in your messaging*).
 - [Additional analyses](#) on the economic impacts of fish and wildlife published by Southwick Associates

Stay Informed

- [Policy News Headlines](#) *Ecological Society of America*
- [Top Headlines](#) *Society of Environmental Journalists*
- [U.S. Government Information Weekly Roundup](#) *UC San Diego*

Engagement Opportunities

Connect with committee members in the U.S. House and Senate – Member assignments have been made for House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over the programs and agencies most relevant to TWS' scope of policy engagement. Use [this template letter](#) to formally introduce yourself to your member(s) of Congress serving on these committees.

Committee rosters are available for:

- [House Committee on Natural Resources](#)
- [House Committee on Appropriations](#) ([Interior](#) and [Agriculture](#) subcommittees)
- [Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works](#)
- [Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources](#)
- [Senate Committee on Appropriations](#) ([Interior](#) and [Agriculture](#) subcommittees)

Please reach out to Kelly for help finding staff contact information for your MOC. *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

CAC Activities

Western Section comments on offshore wind planning in California – The Western Section of The Wildlife Society provided [comments](#) to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on its [California Offshore Wind Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement](#) (PEIS). The planning area covered in the PEIS includes five lease areas offshore Northern and Central California. The intent of the PEIS is to identify programmatic mitigation measures to lessen the environmental impacts of offshore wind energy development in these lease areas. However, the Section's comments emphasize the lack of information available in the PEIS to adequately assess the efficacy of proposed mitigation measures as they relate to impacts to wildlife. They

also point to unacceptable severe impacts to ESA-listed species identified by the PEIS, and conclude that additional research is needed to reduce the uncertainty around these potential impacts. CAC contact: [Lisa Fields](#)

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 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

TWS addresses the importance of federal agency grant, loan, and financial assistance programs to wildlife professionals – At the end of January, the Office of Management and Budget issued a [memorandum](#) suspending federal agency grant, loan and other financial assistance programs. That memo was rescinded a few days later. In response to the memo and its rescission, TWS submitted a [letter](#) to President Trump and federal agency leadership on the importance of federal grants and multi-year cooperative agreements in achieving our Society’s mission of empowering wildlife professionals, as well as the harm caused by an abrupt freeze in this funding.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces \$1.3 billion in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration grant funds for fiscal year 2025 – In mid-January, USFWS announced over [\\$1.3 billion dollars in apportionments](#) to states, commonwealths, and territories in FY25 to support “their efforts to fund conservation and connect people with nature”. Funds are distributed through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration grants program, which in turn is funding via the Wildlife Restoration Act and the Sport Fish Restoration Act. Since their inception, these two bills have provided over \$71 billion in funding to state fish and wildlife agencies.

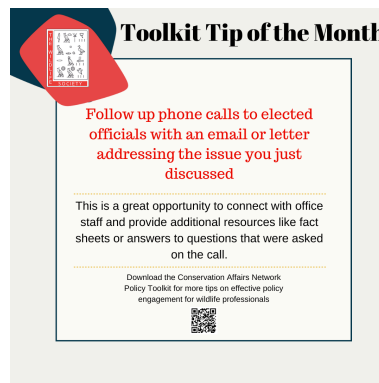
Cancellation of first U.S. National Nature Assessment – The First National Nature Assessment, which was announced in 2022 and began [initial development since 2023](#), was cancelled by the Trump administration in late January. The intent of the assessment was to “assess the status, observed trends, and future projections of America’s lands, waters, wildlife, biodiversity, and ecosystems and the benefits they provide, including connections to the economy, public health, equity, climate mitigation and adaptation, and national security.”

Organizations commit to defending scientific integrity, championing the work of researchers and educators – TWS signed a recent [letter](#) led by the United Science Alliance

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which emphasizes commitments to support, elevate, and fight for science in the face of declining public trust in scientific research. The letter is addressed to all “researchers, educators, and academics of the United States of America”, and highlights the critical importance of science as an “objective, unbiased approach to understanding our world.”

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



Updates from Headquarters

TWS annual report for FY24 now available – The Wildlife Society is pleased to present members with its FY24 Annual Report. You can view the report [here](#).

Submit proposals for TWS2025 – The Wildlife Society will hold its 32nd [Annual Conference](#) in Edmonton, Alberta, from Oct. 5-9. The call for proposals for education and training programs, including workshops, symposia, field trips and panel discussions, is now open through March 9. Proposals related to all aspects of wildlife ecology, management, policy, human dimensions and conservation are invited. [Learn more](#).

Thank you for providing input on TWS policy priorities – Thanks to all members who engaged with the ongoing process of identifying TWS’ future policy priorities. The Policy Priorities Committee is in the process of finalizing recommendations on priorities for TWS’ Council. TWS staff will be sharing feedback from the process and recommendations on how you can adapt this process to develop priorities for your own unit or working group in the future.

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