



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.

Take Action

Final week to comment on proposed Endangered Species Act Rulemaking – The US Fish and Wildlife Service is accepting comments on its [proposal](#) to rescind the definition of “harm” from regulations implementing the Endangered Species Act through **May 19**. TWS and a number of Past Presidents of The Wildlife Society have both submitted comments to the administration. Units interested in submitting comments can use this [TWS guidance document](#) and Society for Conservation Biology North America's [ESA Rule Change Toolkit](#).

Tell members of Congress to support the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area – The Trump administration's [initial budget request](#) for Fiscal Year 2026 includes a drastic reduction in funding for USGS programs that produce critical science informing wildlife conservation. TWS has produced a [template letter](#) for units looking to conduct outreach with members of Congress on behalf of the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area, which includes programs like the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units, Climate Adaptation Science Centers, the National Wildlife Health Center, and more.

Support job protections for nonpartisan civil servants in the federal workforce – The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is currently accepting comments from the public on [rulemaking](#) to implement Schedule F, a policy that would remove civil service protections for tens of thousands of members of the federal workforce, making them at-will employees. The National Wildlife Refuge Association has provided an [action center](#) for individuals interested in commenting on behalf of civil servants working for the USFWS and National Wildlife Refuge System. Units and members can also submit comments directly to OPM until **May 23**.

CAC Activities

Kansas Chapter urges congressional leadership to be the voice of wildlife professionals in Washington – The Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society sent a [letter](#) to congressional leadership expressing "deep concerns regarding recent and proposed actions by our current administration" that impact wildlife professionals, applied science, and conservation partnerships throughout Kansas. The letter outlines federal conservation programs under threat that benefit both wildlife and working landscapes across the state. It urges members of

Increasing the Society's effectiveness through communication and collaboration

Congress to champion wildlife professionals who have dedicated their careers to conserving Kansas' natural resources. *Chapter contact:* [Drew Ricketts](#)

Indiana Chapter issue statement on early successional forest management – The Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society finalized a new [issue statement](#) on managing early successional forests to benefit wildlife. The statement highlights species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in Indiana that depend on young forests, including Indiana and northern long-eared bats, ruffed grouse, several warbler species, eastern box turtles, and timber rattlesnakes. In recent decades, early successional forest management has been negatively impacted by challenges such as fire suppression and invasive species. The statement establishes the Chapter's support for forest management practices that create a mosaic of forest habitats across the landscape, along with cooperative management approaches for both public and private forests. *Chapter contact:* [Zach Voyles](#)

Wildlifer engagement shapes final Alabama captive cervid bill – The Alabama Legislature passed a [final version](#) of [HB509](#) that removed concerning language from earlier drafts regarding private ownership of public trust resources and Chronic Wasting Disease testing requirements. Feedback from members of the Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society and other wildlife professionals, both within and beyond the state, played a critical role in ensuring that science-based policies were incorporated into the final legislation. *CAC contact:* [Ray Metzler](#)

Alberta conservation organizations voice concern over Sustainable Forest Initiative standards compliance – The Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Northern Alberta Chapter, and Nature Alberta published an [open letter](#) to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) expressing serious concerns about Weyerhaeuser Company's continued logging in critical southern mountain caribou habitat. The letter highlights a proposed timber harvest plan that would remove critical habitat within the winter ranges of the Redrock-Prairie Creek and Narraway caribou populations. The letter's authors requested that SFI take steps to ensure that its sustainable forest management standards are being met. *CAC contact:* [Mark Boyce](#)

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 joins call for greater transparency and oversight of federal agency Reduction in Force plans – The Wildlife Society partnered with more than 75 organizations in the United Science Alliance to send a [letter to congressional leadership](#) urging "greater transparency surrounding potential large-scale personnel reductions and reorganizations within federal agencies critical to our nation's scientific enterprise." The letter specifically requested public release of reduction-in-force (RIF) plans and implementation of a robust public consultation process before "any irreversible actions are taken."

Trump administration releases FY2026 budget request – In the White House's [initial budget request](#) for Fiscal Year 2026—the so-called "skinny budget"—the administration proposed significant cuts to existing federal conservation programs across the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. TWS will monitor for more detailed budget proposals in the coming weeks and provide guidance to members on next steps for engagement.

Bird conservation legislation introduced leading up to Migratory Bird Day – Representatives Jared Huffman and Brian Fitzpatrick [introduced](#) the Migratory Bird Protection Act ([H.R. 3188](#)) and the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act ([H.R. 3189](#)), which would build upon existing efforts to protect migratory birds and the most threatened seabird species. "Now more than ever, Congressional action is needed to conserve our country's migratory birds," said Ed Arnett, CEO of The Wildlife Society, in a press release.

USGS grants will freeze, layoffs planned – The federal government has notified U.S. Geological Survey researchers and students that funds could be frozen and staff laid off in the Department of the Interior, [according to USGS staff and university students who work with the grants](#).

Lost federal funding hits tribal wildlife management – Funding freezes and other detrimental federal actions [did not spare Tribes](#). In a [survey](#) conducted by the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, 60% of Tribes responded that they experienced freezing of grants or other federal funding, and 26% faced total cancelation of federal funding. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education lost a number of federal employees.

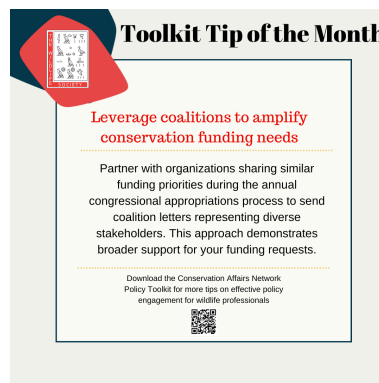
House Natural Resources Committee advances reconciliation bill – The House Committee on Natural Resources [advanced](#) its portion of a larger reconciliation package following a full committee markup. The committee's proposal includes increased opportunities and incentives for energy development and resource extraction on federal lands and attempts to minimize environmental reviews for energy development projects. One controversial amendment added late in the markup mandates the sale of thousands of acres of public lands in Nevada and Utah.

New polling data on attitudes towards oil and gas development on western public lands – The National Wildlife Federation [announced](#) new survey data on voter attitudes towards oil and gas development on public lands in western states, as well as support for safeguards for wildlife and their habitats. Most survey participants said they support keeping fees for oil and gas

development on federal lands and oppose reductions in opportunities for public input in decision-making processes for this development.

Bipartisan Public Lands Caucus announced in U.S. House of Representatives – Representatives Zinke (R-MT-01) and Vasquez (D-NM-02) have announced the formation of the Public Lands Caucus, a congressional coalition “[focused on conserving America’s public lands and expanding access for all Americans](#)”. Caucus leadership includes Vice Chairs Rep. Dingell (D-MI-06) and Simpson (R-ID-02).

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



Updates from Headquarters

TWS policy priorities finalized for 2025 - 2027 – Final policy priorities approved by TWS Council during the spring Council meeting took into account the input of TWS sections, chapters, and working groups, as well as the existing strengths and opportunities of TWS policy staff and NGO partnership. These priorities are:

1. Work to maintain and enhance sources of funding available to wildlife professionals to implement on-the-ground conservation of wildlife and their habitats.
2. Defend and advance the role of science and the expertise of wildlife professionals in wildlife policy and decision-making, and
3. Advocate for legislation which enables wildlife professionals to sustain and enhance the conservation of biological diversity.

A formal letter detailing these priorities and their implementation will be distributed to units and working groups in the near future.

2025 TWS Elections – The ballot for The Wildlife Society’s 2025 election includes nominees for vice president and representatives for the North Central, Northwest, and Western Sections. [Find out more about these candidates.](#)

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