

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

Proposed Endangered Species Act rulemaking opens for public comment – The administration [announced](#) four proposed rules that would impact regulations implementing the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Broadly, the proposed rules relate to listing and critical habitat determinations, interagency cooperation, blanket protections for species listed with threatened status, and deciding factors for critical habitat exclusions. Public comments on the proposed rules will be accepted until **December 22, 2025**. Detailed rule analysis and guidance for engagement will be distributed to CACs and TWS members in the near future.

Submit your photos highlighting member policy engagement – To help TWS emphasize the role of wildlife professionals in supporting science-driven policy, **please consider contributing photos that depict some form of policy engagement to our digital content library**. This could include images from trips to state legislatures or congressional offices, photos of tabling events hosted by your CAC, pictures of CAC members providing testimony to a commission or other decision-making body, etc.

CAC and Working Group Activities

Coastal and Marine Wildlife Working Group launches new policy action alerts – Any wildlife professionals with an interest in marine and coastal wildlife policy can [sign up](#) to receive opportunities to take bite-sized, meaningful environmental action in their inbox. *Policy Chair: [Anna Dubey](#)*

Florida Chapter engages with rules related to wildlife trapping – Larry Perrin recently served as the [Florida Chapter](#)'s representative on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Technical Advisory Group for wildlife trapping in Florida. Larry's objective was to ensure that Florida's rules are consistent with policy recommendations that TWS provided to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for the development of Best Management Practices for wildlife trapping. The new proposed rules are consistent with those policies. The FWC gave approval to the

revised rules at their November meeting and will approve modified regulations to implement them at a final hearing in the future. CAC Contact: [Jay Exum](#)

Texas Chapter hosts re-cap of the 89th Texas legislative session – The Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society offered a webinar highlighting their CAC's engagement over the course of the 89th Texas legislative session. Anyone can access a recording of the webinar [here](#) for inspiration on legislative tracking, CAC operations, and student chapter involvement in conservation policy. As we near the end of 2025, the Chapter continues to monitor issues including the status of New World screwworm, proposed CWD rules in the state, the Texas Mountain Lion Research and Monitoring Plan, renewable energy and data center projects, the proposed cultivation of dotted duckweed, and the acquisition of 54,000 acres in west TX for a new state park. CAC Contacts: [Dr. Matt Wagner](#), [Mary Pearl Meuth](#)

Western Section comments on BLM proposed rulemaking – The Western Section of The Wildlife Society submitted comments to the BLM opposing the proposed rescission of 2024's Conservation and Landscape Health Rule. The Section's [comments](#) "reject the notion that conservation is contrary to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) direction for management under principles of multiple use and sustained yield", an argument presented in the BLM's notice of proposed rule. They argue that multiple use instead includes, and is dependent upon, conservation, "a critical tenet of public lands stewardship". CAC Contact: [Lisa Fields](#)

Federal Updates

TWS opposes proposed rescission of Conservation and Landscape Health Rule – The Wildlife Society [voiced strong opposition](#) to the BLM's proposed rescission of the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, emphasizing the critical importance of conservation in maintaining ecological health and ultimately complying with the agency's multiple-use mandate. We urge the BLM to withdraw its proposal and reaffirm its commitment to conservation and the trained professionals implementing conservation on public lands.

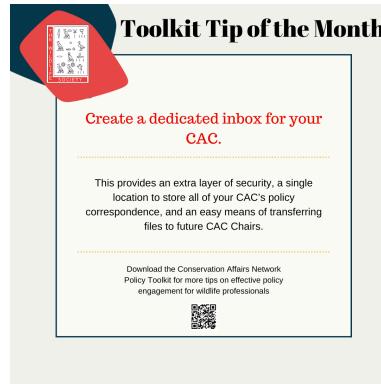
EPA proposes revised definition of "waters of the United States" – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Army are [proposing](#) rulemaking that would revise the definition of "waters of the United States" (WOTUS) within the Clean Water Act. The proposal is a response to the Supreme Court's *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency* decision in 2023, which significantly narrowed the scope of waters protected under the Clean Water Act.

Administration issues gray wolf recovery planning exception findings – The USFWS released [Recovery Planning Exception Findings](#) for gray wolves currently listed as endangered species. This includes wolves in the contiguous United States and Mexico (44-State entity) and in Minnesota (MN entity). In these findings, the Service concludes that status reviews for both entities determined that they do not warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act, and thus recovery planning would not promote their conservation.

Congress passes spending bill for USDA conservation – Several key conservation programs in the U.S. Department of Agriculture [have been funded](#) in appropriations language that passed with the continuing resolution. The continuing resolution ([H.R. 5371](#)) passed through Congress after a record 44-day shutdown. While the administration proposed significant cuts to, or complete elimination of, funding for many of these programs, Congress has provided relatively stable appropriations for the 2026 fiscal year compared to the previous fiscal year.

Bipartisan bill to codify Wildlife Crossings Program introduced in Congress – Congressmen Ryan Zinke (MT) and Don Beyer (VA) have [introduced](#) the Wildlife Road Crossings Program Reauthorization Act of 2025. The bill would permanently codify the Wildlife Crossings Program and authorize its funding through FY2031. The Program funds the construction of wildlife crossing structures (e.g. overpasses and underpasses) by state and tribal governments.

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



Updates from Headquarters

TWS webinar series – Please join us [Wednesday, Dec. 10 at 1:00 p.m. ET](#), for the webinar, "From Science to Statute: How Wildlife Professionals Shape Conservation Policy". Join TWS staff for a webinar exploring how sound science informs effective conservation policy. We'll walk through each stage of the legislative and regulatory

process—from idea to implementation—and highlight where wildlife professionals can make a difference. Learn how to translate your scientific expertise into actionable input, engage strategically in policy development, and help ensure that science remains at the foundation of decisions affecting wildlife and natural resources.

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