



# The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network

August 2025, Volume 11, Issue 8

*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.*

## Request for Feedback

**Help guide TWS engagement with USDA reorganization plan** – The USDA is currently seeing public comment on its [reorganization proposal](#) until August 26. The proposal includes plans to relocate thousands of staff from the National Capital Region (NCR) to one of five hubs and consolidate other offices across the country. Part of this consolidation includes combining stand-alone Forest Service Research Stations into a single location. TWS staff are seeking input from members with any insight on the potential impacts of the reorg proposal to inform our comments to USDA. **Please reach out via [policy@wildlife.org](mailto:policy@wildlife.org) with any relevant feedback by August 22.**

**CAC status report for Section and Chapter Presidents** – TWS staff are asking all current Chapter and Section presidents (or other unit board members) to fill out [this brief survey](#) to help us understand which units have an established Conservation Affairs Committee (CAC) or other policy engagement-focused committee, and what, if any, support needs TWS units have to establish a CAC. A follow-up survey will be distributed to CAC Chairs. Please submit one response per unit by **September 8, 2025**.

## CAC and Working Group Activities

**Maine Chapter meets with Representative Pingree's office** – Members of the [Maine Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) met with local staff from Congresswoman Chellie Pingree's office to advocate for support for the USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units (CRUs). They were able to discuss the work of [Maine's Co-op Unit](#) and the many ways in which research produced by the unit has been critical for wildlife management in the state. They also discussed the importance of a strong and effective Endangered Species Act with office staff. Chapter members report that this was their first time securing an in-person meeting with district staff and that the office was very receptive to this outreach. *CAC contact:* [Joe Roy](#)

**Western Section comments on recovery planning under the California Endangered Species Act** – The [Western Section of The Wildlife Society](#) submitted [comments](#) to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on its Draft Guidelines for Recovery Planning for threatened and endangered species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The Section's comments were supportive of CDFW's approach to

recovery, which consists of scientific assessment, recovery planning, and the development of an implementation strategy. The Section noted this approach is consistent with TWS' position on the [Use of Science in Policy and Management Decisions](#), and mirrors the USFWS framework for listed species recovery. *CAC contact:* [Lisa Fields](#)

### **Oregon Chapter urges appropriators to support the state's federal wildlife professionals**

– The Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society wrote to members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies to highlight the impacts of federal conservation funding on fish, wildlife, and conservation professionals in the state, and to urge appropriators to oppose further personnel reductions across natural resource agencies. Notably, the Chapter highlights the loss of an estimated 1,000 conservation professionals from the federal workforce in OR offices of USFWS, NPS, BLM, USGS, and USFS to date. *Chapter contact:* [Betsy Glenn](#)

### **Habitat Restoration Working Group Leads TWS's effort in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**

– Thirteen TWS working groups led by the Habitat Restoration Working Group will be engaging in the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) as a supporting partner. This initiative is led by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. With over 115 countries involved, it aims to prevent, halt, and reverse ecosystem degradation. TWS working groups and members will be advising on project design, monitoring, and assessment, and assisting in the Best Practices, Monitoring and Youth [task forces](#). If interested in participating, [please provide your information in this form for organizers](#).

**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](mailto:koconnor@wildlife.org)*

## **Federal Updates**

**TWS continues to emphasize the need for Congressional involvement in widespread regulatory reform** – The Wildlife Society [submitted comments](#) in response to a Department of the Interior [Request for Information](#), urging the DoI to uphold science-based decision-making and consult Congress before making major regulatory changes. Our comments emphasize that bypassing these steps risks weakening environmental protections, creating legal uncertainty, and sidelining science in wildlife policy.

**TWS engages on proposed changes to OPM suitability procedures** – The Wildlife Society also [submitted comments](#) opposing the Office of Personnel Management's [proposed changes](#) to federal employee suitability rules due to their ambiguity and potential for misuse. TWS warns that the broad and undefined new suitability factors could erode public trust, suppress scientific integrity, and politicize the federal workforce. The proposed rule would reduce due process protections, undermine workforce stability, and weaken mission readiness across natural resource agencies already struggling with staffing shortages. TWS recommends narrowing the scope of the rule, preserving appeal rights, protecting whistleblowers, and allowing agencies greater discretion in disciplinary actions.

**New director confirmed for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** – U.S. Senate [confirms Brian Nesvik](#) in a 54-43 vote as director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “We congratulate Director Nesvik on his confirmation and look forward to working with him and his staff at the USFWS on key issues surrounding wildlife conservation,” said TWS CEO Ed Arnett.

**TWS staff examine how ‘Alligator Alcatraz’ threatens the Everglades** – A historic conservation battleground is seeing a [renewed legal fight](#) over a detention facility. A new immigrant detention center, dubbed “Alligator Alcatraz,” is being built in the ecologically sensitive Big Cypress region of the Florida Everglades without required environmental reviews, threatening endangered species like the Florida panther and Florida bonneted bat. Conservation groups, Indigenous leaders, and environmental advocates are pushing back, citing legal violations and ecological harm, while calling for immediate action to halt further damage and protect the Everglades for future generations.

**New DOE climate report released, open for public comment** – The Department of Energy released [a report](#) that challenges the long-standing scientific consensus on the dangers of greenhouse gas emissions, drawing sharp criticism from environmental and conservation advocates. The report claims that CO<sub>2</sub>-related warming may be less harmful than previously thought, that aggressive climate action could do more harm than good, and that U.S. policies will have minimal, delayed effects on the global climate.

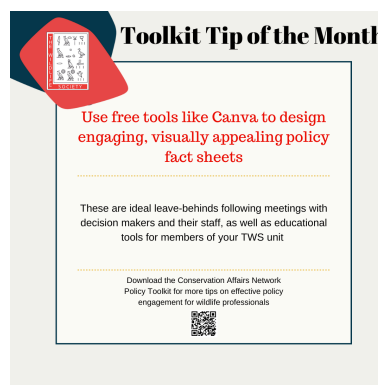
**Wetland birds and habitat get a win** – The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has [approved \\$102.9 million](#) in funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) to support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and partners in conserving, restoring or enhancing more than 548,000 acres of wetlands and associated uplands vital to migratory birds.

**USFWS cancels refuge expansion plan** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has [canceled its plan](#) to expand the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, ending efforts to acquire up to 700,000 acres of land in Texas and New Mexico. This decision comes as a result of the [Administration's Executive Order](#) promoting energy development, agriculture, and reducing federal land regulations.

**Congress discusses proposed Marine Mammal Protection Act changes** – Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources recently [discussed](#) a proposed draft bill to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The bill would alter key definitions within the MMPA, such as “optimum sustainable population” and “necessary to support continued survival.” TWS staff are working on a series of policy briefs and articles covering the MMPA and potential impacts of the proposed legislation.

**Hearing on the Endangered Species Transparency and Reasonableness Act of 2025** – The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries [convened](#) to discuss [H.R. 180](#), a proposed bill that would make significant changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The bill has three main components: modifying the requirements for determining whether a species should be classified as threatened or endangered, establishing caps on attorneys' fees for winning parties in ESA citizen lawsuits, and adding related regulatory requirements.

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



## Updates from Headquarters

**Working group meetings at TWS2025** – The request for working group meetings at The Wildlife Society's 32nd Annual Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, is now open through **August 30**. Requests may be submitted online via our conference site. Please visit [twsconference.org](https://twsconference.org) for details and contact Kerrell with any questions at [kerrell@thenextgreatevent.com](mailto:kerrell@thenextgreatevent.com).

*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](mailto:policy@wildlife.org)*