



Conservation Affairs Network Newsletter

June 2026, Volume 12, Issue 6

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

Firsthand Accounts Survey open through June 30, 2026 – The Wildlife Society has partnered with the American Society of Naturalists (ASN) to survey the impacts of federal policies since January 20, 2025 on science and scientists in the fields of ecology, evolution, marine science, and environmental science. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. [Learn more and take the survey here](#). You can participate until June 30, 2026.

Requests for Member Input

Impacts of Forest Service reorganization – TWS is seeking member input on the impacts of USFS closures on wildlife professionals and science programs across the country. We're especially interested in information on:

- Impacts to specific research stations and laboratory facilities, and the fate of ongoing and/or long-term research projects;
- Specific scientific or technical expertise based at the regional level that will be lost if staff relocate or leave the agency;
- Wildlife management, habitat restoration, and biodiversity-focused programming that will be minimized or stopped in favor of other administrative priorities.

Members interested in providing input or learning more about the proposed rulemaking can contact policy@wildlife.org at any time.

CAC and Working Group Activities

Policy updates from the Texas Chapter – As of June 15, there have been eleven confirmed cases of NWS in Texas (five calves in Zavalla and La Salle counties, two calves and one goat in Edwards County, one goat in Gillespie County, one calf in Tom Green County, and one sheep in Sutton County). There is an additional case in New Mexico (a dog in Lea County). The CAC continues to monitor any new developments regarding NWS. The USDA continues to coordinate the dispersal of about 100 million sterile flies per week, including Texas counties bordering Mexico. The CAC is subscribed to the Texas Agriculture Alert System from the Texas Department of Agriculture, and sent through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.



For the latest developments on NWS, go to the [Texas Animal Health website](#), [USDA NWS website](#), or the [Screwworm Coalition of Texas website](#).

The May commission meeting included an agenda item to propose mandatory harvest reporting of mountain lions. The Texas Chapter [sent a letter to the commission](#) in support of the proposal. Two days before the meeting, this agenda item was withdrawn due to opposition from landowner and agricultural organizations. At the meeting, Chairman Foster directed these groups to work together, with TPWD, over the next year, to recommend an alternate approach to mountain lion data collection. Chapter members are present at all commission meetings to provide input as needed on any natural resource agenda items.

A meeting of TPWD's CWD Task Force is being planned for June 22. Matt Wagner will serve on the task force and attend the meeting.

In preparation for the 90th legislative session of the Texas Legislature, Matt Wagner attended hearings of the Senate Water Ag and Rural Affairs and House Culture Recreation and Tourism committees on interim charges. Desalination plants, declining Fund 9 (Hunting and Fishing License sales) and NWS were topics of discussion. Wagner also attended the Texas Ag Council (TAC) Legislative Field Day at Luling Foundation where he networked with Senator Perry and Senator Flores Offices. Lastly, Wagner attended a Zoom meeting with TAC members and Ag Commissioner candidate Nate Sheets.

British Columbia Chapter addresses provincial and federal policy proposals – The [British Columbia Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Committee](#) has been hard at work in 2026, addressing both provincial and federal regulations and legislation. The chapter [developed a letter](#) addressing proposed regulatory changes regarding the implementation of Fisher Exclusion Boxes (FEBs) in fur-trapping practices in a few management units in central BC, and put forward that these low-cost and low-barrier tools should be mandatory and implemented across the entirety of the red-listed Columbian fisher population range. This statement was endorsed by the international Martes Working Group.

The BC Chapter also [wrote a letter of support](#) for the Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution's position statement to the federal government on the "Getting Major Projects Built in Canada" proposed legislation.

Activity updates, success stories, and contact information – Does your CAC or working group 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



Tools and Resources

Legislation tracking across all 50 state legislatures – Policy staff are now able to track state bills, legislators, and committee actions through the same platform we use to monitor U.S. federal policies and congressional actions. We are pleased to offer this as a tool for CACs looking to engage more effectively with their state’s legislature. Please reach out to [Kelly](#) if you’re interested in learning more about this tool.

Guidance on proposed OMB rulemaking – TWS is continuing to assess the current rulemaking proposal concerning federal financial assistance regulations (see ‘Federal Updates’ below for more information on the contents of the proposal). For individuals and CACs interested in submitting formal comments to the Office of Management and Budget, we are collecting resources from partners and other scientific societies that may enhance your engagement.

- [Overview & FAQs of OMB’s Proposed Regulations on Federal Financial Assistance](#) (EducationCounsel)
- [Coalition tool to comment on OMB proposed rule for federal financial assistance](#) (American Physical Society)
- [Summary of Key Changes in OMB’s Proposed Federal Financial Assistance Rule](#) (Elizabeth Ginexi, former NIH Officer)
- [OMB Proposed Revisions to the Uniform Guidance: Key Takeaways for Award Recipient Organizations](#) (Ropes & Gray)
- [Collection of additional resources on the proposed OMB federal grants rule](#) (AIBS)
- [OMB Proposed Rule Change: What’s at Stake](#) (AIB Policy News)
- [Unpacking the Proposed Rule](#) (Public Health Coalition)
- [Comment Guide on OMB Rulemaking](#) (National Council of Nonprofits)
- [AIBS Issues Statement, Requests Extension of Comment Period for Proposed OMB Federal Grants Rule](#) (AIBS Public Policy Report)

Resources for federal employee terminations – TWS’ page of resources for wildlife professionals affected by federal workforce reductions is [back online](#). We’ll continue to update this page as additional information and resources become available.

Federal Updates

Senate releases draft 2026 Farm Bill – The Senate Agriculture Committee released the long-awaited draft text of [The Agricultural Act of 2026](#) on June 23. Although the Farm Bill typically follows a 5-year cycle, the most recent version, The Agricultural Act of 2018, expired in 2023. Three short-term extensions of that bill have been passed by Congress in the interim to ensure funding for Farm Bill programs, including critical private lands conservation funding under Title II of the legislation.



Critical habitat finalized for rusty patched bumblebee – The USFWS [finalized its designation](#) of approximately 1.5 million acres of land across Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Virginia, Wisconsin, and West Virginia as critical habitat for the rusty patched bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*). The species is notable as the first bee in the continental U.S. to receive federal protections under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Executive order permits off-road vehicle use on federal lands – A new [executive order](#) revoked past rules limiting off-road vehicle use on federal land, calling the previous orders signed by presidents Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter “unnecessary and counterproductive.” [Read more in our news coverage.](#)

Feds propose changes to grant funding – The public is asked to weigh in on the Trump administration’s more than 400-page proposed rule that would significantly alter the federal grant process. The proposed changes would place federal grant decisions in the hands of political appointees, allow funding to be switched off when government priorities change and prevent flexibility in the agencies’ application of this new rule book. [Read more in our news coverage.](#)

Cut and reframed, what will remain of the USFS – For the second year in a row, the U.S. Forest Service is facing significant proposed cuts to funding and programs. The proposed zeroing out of significant functions comes as the Forest Service (USFS) juggles a highly contested reorganization plan, which would bring the agency’s headquarters to Utah and close regional offices and research facilities, with the aftershocks of reductions in force that removed foundational knowledge. [Read more in our news coverage.](#)

New plan released to conserve migration routes – The federal government has announced a new coordinated plan for how groups can work together to conserve migration routes for elk and other large game species across the West. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [The Migratory Big Game: A Framework for Conservation Action](#) focuses on how federal agencies, states, tribes and private landowners can coordinate efforts to reduce habitat fragmentation and open up big game migration corridors by leveraging and expanding on current projects. [Read more in our news coverage.](#)

Bill aims to protect public lands workforce through 2030 – A newly introduced bill aims to prevent further reductions in force and layoffs at public land management agencies until after 2030 due to the adverse effects it has had on public land management. The Public Lands Workforce Stability Act, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives, would put back in place the ban on reduction in force programs until 2030. [Read more in our news coverage.](#)



Congress expands support for tribal wildlife crossing projects – Lawmakers have included funding for wildlife crossings in a bipartisan transportation package that the U.S. House of Representatives will vote on in the coming weeks. [The bill](#) also looks to increase access to transport grant programs by removing the requirement that Tribes match federal funds. Instead, the federal government would fully fund approved projects. The change would increase Tribal access to the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program as well as Aquatic Organism Passage and Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, otherwise known as BUILD grants. [Read more in our coverage.](#)

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

Updates from Headquarters

Please share your thoughts about TWS membership – The Wildlife Society is excited to conduct its first member survey in more than ten years. Members should have received an email from Oregon State University with the subject line, "Please Share Your Thoughts about TWS Membership". We encourage all members to complete the survey by the **July 24 deadline**. Your feedback will help us better understand what members value and how we can strengthen TWS programs, services and benefits.

Only a few days left to vote! – The deadline to vote in The Wildlife Society's Council election is June 30! This year's ballot includes nominees for the positions of vice president, Central Mountains and Plains representative and Northeast representative. Log in to your member portal and navigate to the election tab to vote today.

Call for featured artists at TWS2026 – This year's Annual Conference plenary theme is centered on the role of the arts in conservation. We want to bring back the art of conservation by celebrating the creativity of our members. This is not a competition, and all skill levels are welcome—so pick up a brush, pencil, camera, microphone or your medium of choice and have fun! We look forward to seeing what you create. [Submit high resolution images, recordings or files of your art before Aug. 31.](#)