



Conservation Affairs Network Newsletter

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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

CAN learning session on the intersection of wildlife management policy and rewilding initiatives – [Join fellow members](#) of The Wildlife Society's Conservation Affairs Network and staff from Wildlands Network and the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators for a one-hour interactive working session aimed at exploring how current state, Tribal, and federal wildlife management frameworks align with emerging concepts of rewilding. This discussion is intended to bring together wildlife professionals, researchers, managers, and policy experts to share perspectives, identify legal and policy opportunities, and discuss practical challenges to implementing rewilding initiatives across North America. **Please register to participate [here](#).**

CAC and Working Group Activities

North Carolina Chapter supports ESA listing for the southern hognose snake – The North Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society [submitted formal comments](#) to the USFWS in response to the Service's proposed listing of the southern hognose snake (*Heterodon simus*) under the Endangered Species Act. The Service's proposal is to list the species as threatened under section 4(d) of the ESA. The Chapter provided several recommendations for targeted actions to support recovery of the species, including habitat restoration and control of invasive fire ants. They urged the USFWS to identify critical habitat for the species in coordination with states and other conservation organizations across the species' range. CAC contact: [Sau Silwal](#)

Florida Chapter engages on the final determination of removing "harm" from ESA regulations – Members of the FLTWS Conservation Committee are standing alongside the Florida Wildlife Federation and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) to oppose the recent ruling to remove habitat protections from the Endangered Species Act. The committee has prepared statements to help the SELC fight this decision in court and will continue to monitor future developments to ensure endangered species remain protected in Florida and nationwide. CAC contacts: [Brooke Talley](#), [Rob Myer](#)



Policy updates from the Texas Chapter – The Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society continues to engage with the issue of New World Screwworm (NWS) in the state. As of July 23, there have been 42 positive NWS detections in 15 Texas counties and one county in New Mexico. No wildlife occurrences have been detected thus far, although it is almost certain that deer and other wildlife are being impacted. Landowners and hunters remain vigilant, especially during this fawning season. 26 organizations provided invited testimony to the Texas House Agriculture and Livestock Committee regarding NWS, including staff from USDA, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Texas Wildlife Association.

Matt Wagner represented the Chapter at a meeting of the Texas Parks and Wildlife CWD Working Group in late June. Various scenarios were presented in preparing Disease Management Plans, dealing with positive breeder facilities and the disposal of deer.

CAC Co-Chair Mary Pearl Meuth will be honored at the Texas Wildlife Association's 2026 Annual Convention with the Sam Beasom Conservation Award. Congratulations to past president and CAC co-chair Mary Pearl for being recognized with this award! Her contributions to TWA and statewide conservation have had a positive impact!

If you are interested in participating in TCTWS policy discussion activities or attending Commission Meeting(s), legislative hearings or more alongside TCTWS, please reach out to the [Conservation Affairs Committee](#) or Co-Chairs [Matt Wagner](#) and [Mary Pearl Meuth](#) for further information or to get involved. TCTWS members are always encouraged to participate in these activities.

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

Federal Updates

TWS opposes OMB's proposed regulation for federal financial assistance – The Wildlife Society submitted [formal comments](#) in response to proposed revisions to federal financial assistance regulations, emphasizing how the administration's proposal would threaten the work of wildlife professionals and undermine the scientific foundations of conservation.

Consortium supports passage of the America the Beautiful Act – The Wildlife Society joined with other members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners consortium to [voice support](#) for the America the Beautiful Act (H.R. 9250) to members of the U.S. House and Senate. The bill includes, among other things, reauthorization for the Legacy Restoration Fund, which represents "an historic investment in addressing the deferred maintenance backlog across our national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, Bureau of Land



Management lands, and Bureau of Indian Education facilities.” The letters call for the expeditious passage of the bill in both chambers.

Coalition requests funding for South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program – The Wildlife Society joined with recreational fishing and boating community members, conservation organizations, professional societies, and maritime and angling businesses, to [request sufficient funding](#) for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program in FY27 federal spending for the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). The requested funding would allow ACOE “to accelerate construction of already-authorized Everglades restoration projects to protect drinking water supplies, enhance wildlife habitat, create thousands of jobs, and provide a much-needed boost to Florida’s tourism, real estate, and outdoor economy.”

TWS supports prioritization of federal sentencing for wildlife trafficking offenses – The Wildlife Society, in coordination with and as a member of the IUCN, submitted [a letter](#) to the U.S. Sentencing Commission in July, 2026. The letter requests that the Commission designate federal sentencing for serious wildlife trafficking offenses as a priority in its upcoming amendment cycle.

USFWS issues suite of final rules related to ESA implementation – The USFWS issued three significant final rules affecting the implementation of the Endangered Species Act. This includes the [rescission of the regulatory definition of “harm”](#) in ESA regulations, the [removal of the “blanket rule”](#) for protecting species listed with threatened status, and changes to the process of [designating and/or excluding areas of critical habitat](#).

BLM transfers approval from solar project to the first data center on national public lands – The BLM [announced](#) its approval to “construct, operate, and maintain a data center on 88.5 acres of public land”, marking what is believed to be the first data center approved on BLM-managed lands. This site was originally approved for the development of a solar energy project. [BLM’s justification](#) for transferring this approval from the Townsite Solar 2 project to the Townsite Data Center without embarking in NEPA and associated public comment processes is that the two projects and their environmental impacts are “substantially the same.”

Critical habitat for the Canada lynx formally revised – The USFWS released a [final rule](#) to revise critical habitat that was previously designated for the contiguous U.S. distinct population segment of the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). [The rule designates](#) approximately 14,030 square miles of critical habitat across four western states, removing approximately 7,733 square miles that were designated as critical habitat from 2014 rulemaking. It includes areas of Colorado for the first time since the species was listed.



Florida Keys mole skink receives ESA endangered status – The Florida Keys mole skink (*Eumeces egregius egregius*) has been [listed as endangered under the ESA](#). USFWS originally proposed threatened status for the species, however feedback and additional data provided during the public comment process resulted in the conclusion that the species' risk of extinction was greater than previously understood. Critical habitat for the species is not designated in the final listing.

USFWS proposes revisions to ESA 4(d) regulations for the grizzly bear – The Service is soliciting public comments on a proposal to revise section 4(d) provisions for grizzly bears in the lower 48 states. According to USFWS, the revisions are intended to "[increase management flexibility for grizzly bears in areas where the species has met, and in many cases exceeded, federal recovery benchmarks](#)." Comments can be submitted to USFWS until August 17, 2026.

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

Updates from Headquarters

Native Student Professional Development Program is now accepting applications – Learn more about the program [here](#). [Applications](#) are due by EOD August 15, 2026.

2026 TWS election results are in – Members of The Wildlife Society have [voted](#) for Karl Martin as the new vice president after the 2026 election results have been tallied. Angela Fuller was elected as the Northeast Representative, while Terry Riley was elected as the Central Mountains and Plains Representative. The Wildlife Society would like to congratulate all candidates who ran for a position this election cycle, including Budd Veverka, Scott Williams and Adam Ahlers.

Registration is open for TWS2026 – [Registration is open](#) for TWS' 33rd Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, which will take place Nov. 1–5. To secure the early-bird registration rate, be sure to register by July 31. We hope you'll join us this fall!