



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

TWS comment development on proposed Roadless Rule rescission – The USDA has [released](#) proposed rulemaking and a draft EIS to facilitate the rescission of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The public has 30 days to submit comments and feedback in response to this proposal.

To support TWS' development of substantive comments on this rulemaking, we're hoping to identify a subset of members with relevant expertise and an interest in helping with rulemaking analysis and comment drafting. If you or any members of your chapter, section, or working group has expertise in National Forest policy, management of sensitive wildlife and/or habitats on National Forest lands (particularly Identified Roadless Areas), wildfire risk management, forest health management, or any other subject area relevant to this rulemaking, and would be willing to contribute to this effort, please reach out to koconnor@wildlife.org. TWS will continue to keep our members informed on the proposed rulemaking as the public comment period progresses.

CAC and Working Group Activities

Northeast Section, TWS HQ collaborate on Forest Legacy Project support letter – The Wildlife Society and the Northeast Section of The Wildlife Society collaborated on a [letter of support](#) for the West Virginia Forest Legacy South Branch Project addressed to Tom Schultz, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. The project would place permanent conservation easements across 6 properties and approximately 2,101 acres near the Monongahela National Forest and Nathaniel Mountain Wildlife Management Area in West Virginia. The letter emphasizes the "well-supported, landscape-scale investment in habitat connectivity and species conservation" represented by the project.

North Dakota Chapter comments on USFWS Drain Tile Setback Request for Information – The North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society (NDCTWS) provided [comments](#) in response to a request for information on the efficacy and implementation of the 2024 NWRS Drain Tile Setback rule. USFWS has purchased over 20,000 wetland easements in the state of North Dakota protecting over 1 million acres of wetlands in the Prairie Pothole



Region (PPR). NDCTWS voiced support for the wetland protections and site-specific evaluation procedures included in the 2024 rule. They note the ongoing loss of wetlands on private lands across the PPR, which could be exacerbated by changing, weakening, or eliminating the 2024 rule. *Chapter contact:* [Mandy Guinn](#)

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

Conservation community supports federal wetland easements and protections implemented by USFWS – In late July 2026, the USFWS issued a [Request for Information](#) on the efficacy of the 2024 National Wildlife Refuge System Drain Tile Setbacks rule. That rule governs the standards used by USFWS to prevent drainage impacts to wetlands protected under the Service's voluntary wetland easements. USFWS received over 200,000 comments on the RFI, including [these comments](#) submitted by TWS and this [coalition letter](#) co-signed by TWS. USFWS has since [announced via social media channels](#) that no updates to the 2024 rule or its implementation are planned, as response that has been [met with criticism](#) by some members of Congress.

DOI announces largest expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities in history of the USFWS – Final rulemaking to expand hunting and sport fishing opportunities across the National Wildlife Refuge System in 32 states was [announced this month](#). This includes increased access at 107 refuges and four national fish hatcheries, and first-time hunting and sport fishing opportunities at 14 refuges and three hatcheries.

USDA proceeds with proposed rulemaking to rescind Roadless Rule, announces revisions to USFS travel management regulations – The USDA has [released](#) proposed rulemaking and a draft EIS to facilitate the rescission of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This follows a Notice of Intent to prepare rule language and a draft Environmental Impact Statement issued last year (read TWS' comments on the NOI [here](#), and our previous news coverage [here](#)). The stated intent of the rulemaking is to "reduce regulatory burden and return decisionmaking for the management of inventoried roadless areas to the land management planning process at the individual national forest level." The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule regulates road construction, reconstruction and timber harvest on about 44.7 million acres of inventoried roadless areas, except where state-specific rules exist. TWS' comments submitted in response to the original rulemaking can be read [here](#).



USDA subsequently [issued a NOI](#) to prepare rulemaking and a draft EIS relating to regulations governing USFS travel management. These regulations pertain to the use of existing roads, trails, airfield, trailheads, and other access points across the National Forest System. The NOI states that the proposed action would favor “increased access while simplifying regulatory requirements and preserving local decision-making.” Comments in response to the two actions are due **September 21 and 23**, respectively.

Coalition correspondence roundup – TWS, as a participating organization of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, issued the following correspondence over the last month.

- [Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act of 2026 \(WEPA\) support letter](#)
- [Letter of opposition to the SAFE amendment in the Agricultural Act of 2026](#)
- [Support letter for the Conservation Title within the Senate’s draft 2026 Farm Bill](#)

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

Tools and Resources

Updated TWS fact sheet: Lead (Pb) and wildlife – TWS has published an updated version of our existing fact sheet detailing the [impacts of lead on wildlife](#). This version includes newly-published research and recent policy shifts since the fact sheet was first published in 2017.

TWS position statements on wildlife.org – TWS staff are working on several improvements to the layout of the website to make position and issue statements more easily accessible to members. In the interim, check out this video on how to quickly navigate to these documents in the resource library.

 Recording 2026-08-24 122400.mp4

Updates from Headquarters

Certified members: Opt into the TWS public certification directory – If you haven’t already – and you would like your name to be searchable in the [certification directory](#) on our homepage – you must opt in to give us permission to share your information. This public directory allows anyone to search for wildlife biologists who hold a certification/professional designation through TWS. Searchable titles include Certified Wildlife Biologist® (CWB®), Associate Wildlife Biologist® (AWB®), and Qualified Airport Wildlife Biologist (QAWB).

To opt in, login to your TWS account, click on the “Your Account” tab, and select “Certification”. Then, toggle the box next to “Please select if you would like to opt-in or opt-out of the public certification directory by toggling this checkbox.” By default, your



name will be the only field visible in the public database. In order to make your email address, phone number, etc. visible, click the "Get My Info" button, and toggle the "Directory" button next to each field you would like made public.

Survey of natural resource professionals to guide higher education – We are currently conducting a [survey of natural resource professionals](#) to guide higher education. The goal of this survey is to obtain feedback from actively working natural resource professionals to identify what academic content, field techniques, and professional skills they find most important when conducting their job. As a practicing natural resource professional, your perspective is essential. The information you provide will help guide curriculum development, field training, and professional skill preparation for future ecology and wildlife professionals. By taking a few minutes to complete this survey, you can help ensure that students enter the workforce with the competencies, expectations, and practical skills needed to succeed and contribute effectively to the future of natural resource conservation, management, and research.

Wings of Survival takes flight – [The Wings of Survival expedition](#) began its journey from Alaska on Aug. 1 and has already traveled 1,288 miles in 19 days. This world-first Race with Nature follows GPS-tagged whimbrels along their migration route, connecting endurance, science and conservation in an incredible journey. Visit the Wings of Survival website to learn more, and stay tuned for TWS coverage and opportunities to get involved.