



# Conservation Affairs Network Newsletter

September 2026, Volume 12, Issue 9

*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

**Join us in Des Moines for a CAN learning and networking event at the Iowa Capitol –** CAN participants and other interested attendees at TWS' upcoming annual conference are invited to participate in a tour of the Iowa State Capitol followed by an informal coffee hour to network with other wildlifers interested in conservation policy. The tour and social are scheduled for **November 2** beginning at **9:30 AM** local time. **Spots for the Capitol tour are limited:** Please RSVP [here](#). We'll share more information about the social following the tour closer to the conference! *Staff contact:* [Kelly O'Connor](#)

## CAC and Working Group Activities

**Policy and public lands at Central Mountains and Plains Section annual meeting –** Public lands was the theme for the annual meeting of the Central Mountains and Plains Section of TWS held in Medora, ND September 9–12. Walt Dabney, NPS and Texas Parks and Wildlife retiree, gave an excellent presentation on the history and future of America's public lands. Other presentations provided additional information on management and conservation of grasslands. Attendees had a guided tour of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and learned about challenges with bison, elk, and horse management in the park. We also visited the new Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. TR was a great conservationist who added substantially to lands protected in National Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Refuges. Participants came away with an enhanced appreciation of public lands and the need to protect them. *CAC chair:* [Mark Lindvall](#)

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

## Federal Updates

**USFS extends public comment period for rulemaking to rescind Roadless Rule –** The Forest Service has [extended](#) the public comment period for its proposed rescission of the Roadless Areas Conservation Rule by 15 days to **October 6**. With help from a group of our



members, TWS has worked to develop comments on the proposed rulemaking which will be made available soon. See our coverage of the proposed rule [here](#).

**An internal memo issued by the USFWS would reinterpret the ESA to exclude incidental take** – The USFWS director Brian Nesvik distributed an internal memo on Sept. 14th showing that the agency intends to reinterpret the meaning of ‘take’ under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to exclude killings or injury to wildlife that are accidental or result from actions not specifically aimed at wildlife. The reinterpretation would significantly limit cases where ESA protections apply. Read more [here](#).

**Farm Bill clears the Senate Agriculture Committee, heads to the floor** – [The Senate’s draft of the 2026 Farm Bill](#) passed 12–11 along party lines and moves forward to the Senate floor. The House passed its version of the bill back in April. The current Farm Bill extension is set to expire Sept. 30, 2026. Read more from [TRCP](#).

**EPA and Army Corps propose revised definition of “Waters of the United States”** – The [current rulemaking](#) updates a rule proposed [last November](#), which defined a “relatively permanent” body of water protected under the Clean Water Act as one that flowed either every day or during the “wet season.” Now the administration proposes to further restrict the definition to bodies of water that flow every day except for temporary interruptions such as droughts lasting less than 30 days. See our coverage [here](#). Comments can be submitted in the Federal Register until **October 9th**.

**President Trump signs executive order, “Supporting America’s Ranchers”** – The [executive order](#), signed on Sept. 4th, calls for the Secretary of the Interior to determine whether gray wolves and Mexican wolves have met recovery criteria for delisting or downlisting under the ESA. The order also asks for legislative recommendations to remove or reduce ESA protections for wolves. Read more [here](#) from our staff.

**USFS announces closure of 23 research stations across a dozen states** – The USFS announced in a [press release](#) that it would close 23 research and development stations to reduce building and maintenance costs following a national review of its facilities. See our coverage [here](#).

**NWRS Invasive Species Strike Team Act of 2025 passes the House** – [H.R. 4219](#) gives permanent legal backing to the Invasive Species Strike Team program, which is carried out by the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System. The program “operates teams in each USFWS region that coordinate with public and private entities to address invasive species and related conservation issues in and around the National Wildlife Refuge System.” The bill also requires USFWS to report to Congress on the program’s efforts and progress.



**USFWS announces streamlined statewide approach for addressing conflicts with federally protected common ravens** – A [press release](#) by the USFWS states that the new approach will allow state agencies to obtain statewide depredation permits and issue subpermits to eligible landowners or other parties. See FAQs [here](#).

**BLM proposes rule to streamline production site development in National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska** – The [proposed rule](#) would “establish pre-defined criteria for defined and repeatable common activities with similar environmental effects that, when met by an applicant, would result in a streamlined permitting process for qualifying production sites.” The rule could exempt oil projects in the NPR-A from individual environmental reviews required by NEPA. Comments can be submitted in the Federal Register until **Nov. 9th**.

**DOI notices revisions to NEPA implementing procedures, adds categorical exclusions for forest and woodland density management, timber salvage harvest** – The revisions, which took immediate effect, add new categorical exclusions (CE) for both [timber salvage harvest](#) and [forest/woodland density management](#).

**USFWS finalizes new process for migratory game bird hunting seasons** – The USFWS [announced](#) the finalizing of a new process for authorizing seasonal migratory game bird hunting. Under the new process, which was published as a [final rule](#), the USFWS will establish federal hunting season conditions through memoranda once every 3 years instead of through annual federal rulemaking. Memoranda can be updated sooner than 3 years if the USFWS decides it is necessary.

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

## Tools and Resources

**TWS Fact Sheet: Climate Change and Wildlife Conservation** – This new addition to TWS' library of policy resources covers the issue of climate change as it relates to impacts on wildlife science, conservation, and professionals. [Access the fact sheet here](#).

**TWS Journals Climate Change Virtual Collection** – To complement The Wildlife Society's Climate Change and Wildlife Conservation Fact Sheet and engagement in Climate Week NYC 2026, this [curated collection](#) highlights influential climate papers from the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, and *Wildlife Monographs*.

**OnX Public Land Comment Map** – CAN participants may be interested in this [new mapping tool](#) from OnX that overlays public lands with active public comment



opportunities. Take a look and see if there are open opportunities to engage with public lands near you!

## **Updates from Headquarters**

**Student Development Working Group hosting two-part Policy Webinar Series** – Join the Student Development Working Group for two policy-focused webinar opportunities:

### Policy 101

Part I of SDWG's Policy Webinar Series

Date & Time: September 30th, 2026 at noon ET.

**Register here:** [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ROoLY5WuS3K8mNfABfX31Q](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ROoLY5WuS3K8mNfABfX31Q)

This presentation is geared toward citizens and wildlife professionals who want to make a change, but don't know where to start. The goal is to help individuals move from simply caring about an issue to understanding how policy decisions are made and how they can effectively participate in shaping them.

### Boots on the Ground: Engaging in Policy

Part II of SDWG's Policy Webinar Series

Date & Time: October 7th, 2026 @ 6 – 7:30 pm ET

**Register here:** <https://tinyurl.com/TWSpolicy>

Open to all TWS members; see flyer below.

How do you engage in policy in a way that actually leads to tangible results? Join a panel of wildlife professionals for a candid conversation about ways to engage in policy and learn the processes for influencing legislation. Panelists will share their experiences in policy and how they have shaped the careers that they are in now. They will also provide practical advice for wildlifers interested in policy careers.



Advancing Conservation Through Science,  
Community, and Professional Excellence

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6 – 7:30 PM  
ET



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**Cassi Ferri**

Legislative Analyst  
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