

# The AFWA Strategist

Update for Members and Partners of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Winter 2020

## Legislative Updates & Administrative Policies

**New USFWS Director Confirmed** -- On December 12, the Senate confirmed Aurelia Skipwith as director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service by a vote of 52 to 39.

**FY2020 Omnibus Enacted Funding Government through September 2020** – On December 20, President Trump enacted a bill that will keep the federal government open until the end of federal fiscal year 2020. Some environmental riders were included, other contentious or unresolved items were left out like PFAS, and many of our federal conservation partners and the programs they administer saw an increase in funding. The omnibus also included permanent enactment of the Pittman-Robertson Modernization Act. Further, the omnibus provides \$9m for APHIS-Veterinary Services cervid health activities, of which \$5m is provided for allocation to State departments of wildlife and agriculture to further develop and implement chronic wasting disease surveillance, testing, management, and response activities. A more robust analysis of the omnibus will be distributed soon.

**Senate Committee Passes America’s Conservation Enhancement Act (S.3051)** -- On December 17, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works passed by unanimous consent [S.3051](#), which includes provisions for NAWCA, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act, Chesapeake Bay conservation and restoration, Great Lakes research and conservation, PR Modernization, provisions for a CWD Task Force which include much of the research needs included in the CWD Transmission Study in Cervidae Act (S.382, H.R.837), and more beneficial provisions. The bill has momentum and is expected to be part of broader conservation legislation conversations this session of Congress.

**December 5<sup>th</sup> HNR Markup Passes AFWA Priorities and S.209** -- During the same markup as RAWA, the House Committee on Natural Resources also passed PR Modernization by unanimous consent (H.R.877) and several Tribal governance related bills. Ranking Member Rob Bishop raised concerns and opposition to [S.209](#), otherwise known as the *PROGRESS for Indian Tribes Act*, which is the Tribal Self-Governance bill AFWA has spent several Congresses working to improve. Amendments to exclude Bureau of Reclamation and water-related issues from the bill failed. Mr. Bishop submitted for the congressional record a letter of concern submitted by Utah Governor Hubert and AFWA’s letter of concern submitted in 2014, stating that many of the issues and concerns raised in these letters have not been addressed and must be addressed before the bill is brought to the floor. I encourage you to review this bill because it still contains language that AFWA staff find disconcerting such as this found in Section 413: “CONFLICTING PROVISIONS.—Subject to section 101(a) of the PROGRESS for Indian Tribes Act and except with respect to programs described under section 403(c), *this title shall supersede any conflicting provision of law (including any conflicting regulations) (emphasis added).*”

**Reauthorization of Wallop-Breaux Waiting on Transportation Package** -- [H.R.4828](#), the *Sport Fish Restoration and Recreational Boating Safety Act of 2019*, which was introduced on October 23 by Rep. Joe Cunningham and 6 other cosponsors, is awaiting the culmination of a comprehensive Transportation bill to emerge from the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. In the meantime, the Angling and Boating Alliance is garnering additional cosponsors to the bill and working with staff of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation to introduce a companion bill. However, we realized the bill only includes an administrative increase for WSFR staff for the Sportfish Restoration Program only, and not the Wildlife Restoration Program -- nor does it create the equality of providing the WSFR program with the flexibility to obligate their Wildlife Restoration administrative funds over two fiscal years like they are already doing on the Sportfish Restoration. We will be working with our bill sponsors and the committees of jurisdiction to manage these legislative drafting oversights.

Founded in 1902, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies represents North America’s fish and wildlife agencies to advance science-based management and conservation of species and their habitats for the public’s long-term benefit and use.

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## AFWA Executive Committee Updates

The AFWA Executive Committee met in Washington, DC on December 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>. The following is a summary of discussions and decision at the meetings:

- Participated in facilitated strategic planning discussion with consultants regarding mission, vision, organizational culture, and goals.”
- Election of Rick Jacobson (CT) as a new member;
- Approval of the amended budget;
- Discussions on Bear Wise, the MSCG process, populating a new President’s Task Force on Science and Landscape Conservation, membership requests from energy corporations, and sharing of state data with fish and wildlife colleagues;
- Reports from staff on RAWA and other legislation;
- Approval of the new logo and name *Fall Flights* to replace State Contributions to NAWCA Projects in Canada;
- Update on legal strategy from Carol Frampton, NWTF;
- Visit from Margaret Everson and discussion on forming an Executive Communications Council and update on FWS activities



*Save the date...*

110th AFWA Annual Meeting  
Sheraton Grand Sacramento Hotel  
Sacramento, California  
September 13-16, 2020

[www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org)



Digital version of *The AFWA Strategist* is available on our website:  
[www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-informs/afwa-strategist](http://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-informs/afwa-strategist)

## Recovering America’s Wildlife Act- Update

Happy New Year, and we hope you all had a relaxing holiday. This year promises to be an exciting one for the *Recovering America’s Wildlife Act* with momentum building in the House. On Thursday, December 5th, the *Recovering America’s Wildlife Act* (H.R.3742) passed through the House Committee on Natural Resources with a vote of 26-6 for passage. The bill passed as an [amendment in the nature of a substitute](#), and a summary of the [bill changes is available here](#). The same bipartisan spirit that has advanced the campaign to this point with [163 cosponsors](#), which was demonstrated in the vote for committee passage with seven Republicans and 19 Democrats voting “yes.” This is a huge milestone for the campaign and a strong signal to Congress that this bill is a priority and has a solid chance of passing this Congress. The next step is getting the bill passed on the House floor. Stay tuned for timing on that, but the bill is well positioned to be included in a conservation package, if that takes shape now that it has passed out of committee. We ask for your help to keep pressing for additional cosponsors to get as many as possible before we get to a House vote to ensure strong support, and all of this will inform and motivate the Senate process. Thank you for all that you and your staff are doing to build support for the legislation. Those letters and resolutions of support from Governors, Commissions, state agencies and partners have been invaluable in leveraging congressional support. Please help us keep up the buzz on social media and wherever possible use the campaign hashtag #RecoverWildlife. See [here the Statement of Support from AFWA](#) that we released following the committee vote, as well as AFWA’s [press release here](#) that was sent last month. As always, please reach out to Sean Saville, AFWA’s Campaign Manager, at [ssaville@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ssaville@fishwildlife.org) or 202-838-2561 with any questions.

## Southern Wings Successes Continue to Soar

Over 50% of U.S. bird species spend over half the year outside of the U.S. Since the 1970s, 2.9 Billion birds have been lost. Southern Wings has worked since 2009 to help reverse the bird crisis. Thirty-two state fish and wildlife agencies have contributed over \$2.9 Million to conservation of priority species through 24 projects in 11 countries with countless partners. They have leveraged over \$6 Million in partner funds. Over 1 Million acres have been conserved, restored, or managed and over 800,000 trees have been planted. 81 Species of Greatest Conservation Need have been positively impacted. The [infographic can be downloaded](#) from AFWA’s website.

Our latest project success story highlights the amazing work in the grasslands of northern Mexico. Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Montana have contributed to a partnership led by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to enroll 308,000 acres in the Sustainable Grazing Network since 2013, with more than 90,000 acres enhanced and 5,000 acres restored.

## Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap

The Association adopted the Fish and Wildlife Relevancy Roadmap at its September Annual meeting. The roadmap was developed by a team led by Tony Wasley and Steve Williams and fulfills one of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The roadmap includes more than one hundred strategies and tactics to overcome 19 barriers to engaging broader constituencies. The Wildlife Management Institute is offering funding through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program to support implementation of the roadmap. The application can be [found HERE](#) and should be submitted to Matt Dunfee at [mdunfee@wildlifemgt.org](mailto:mdunfee@wildlifemgt.org) by Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Roadmap is available on the AFWA website at this [LINK](#).