

# The AFWA Strategist

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

Winter 2017-2018

## Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 4647)



We are very excited that the long-awaited **Recovering America's Wildlife Act** was introduced on December 14<sup>th</sup>! This bill reflects the recommendation included in the Blue Ribbon Panel's final report and calls for annually dedicating \$1.3 billion in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters for fish and wildlife conservation.

Our House champions, Congressman Fortenberry (R-NE) and Congresswoman Dingell (D-MI) are enthusiastic about getting this historic legislation introduced and shepherding it through the congressional process. We look forward to continuing our work with their offices, as well as with all of our **Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife** partners to support and build public support for the bill. We're working to spread our message far and wide, and encourage partners to share the good news with their networks, engage members in advocacy to support the bill and generate positive media. Please go to the campaign website at [www.OurNatureUSA.com](http://www.OurNatureUSA.com) for more information. If you're interested in social media content on the legislative introduction, we've created several Alliance social media channels to communicate with our audiences as well, and we encourage folks to share, like and promote that content as well. In addition, we encourage everyone to use the hashtag #Funding4Wildlife in social media posts. Those channels can be found @OurNatureUSA, or refer to the website for more information on social media.

Please contact our Campaign Manger, Sean Saville, at [ssaville@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ssaville@fishwildlife.org) with any questions on materials, communications or general messaging around the legislation.

*Save the date...*

**108<sup>th</sup> AFWA Annual Meeting  
Tampa Marriott Waterside  
Hotel and Marina  
September 9-12, 2018**



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



## AFWA Executive Committee Updates

The Executive Committee met at the AFWA headquarters on December 4<sup>th</sup> to conduct the official business of the Association. The following is a summary of decisions and discussions at the meeting:

- The 2018 budget was reviewed and finalized.
- Virgil Moore moved and Hepler seconded that Carol Bambery work on the bylaws so federal members can vote at committee meetings but not at the business meeting, with no harm done to the provinces or territories. Carol will also have to review the articles of incorporation. Motion passed.
- Jen Mock Schaeffer and Sean Saville gave an update on the status of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and a change in one of the sponsors.
- Jen Mock Schaeffer gave an update on the Chronic Wasting Disease legislation and grant opportunities.
- John Lord gave an update on the National Survey.
- Jen Mock Schaeffer gave an update on the WGA and discussion we have had with them.
- Glenn Hughes, the new CEO of ASA introduced himself to the committee.
- Drue Winters, Dan Cassidy and Ed Thompson gave updates on AFS and TWS respectively.
- Kelly Hepler (ND) gave an update on the WSFR Joint Task Force.
- USFS Chief Tony Took gave an update to the committee.

The Executive Committee also reviewed the final version of the new 2018-2020 strategic plan and got a sneak preview of the new AFWA website which will be launched in February, 2018.

Please contact Ron Regan ([rregan@fishwildlife.org](mailto:rregan@fishwildlife.org)) if you would like more information on any of these subjects or if you have suggestions regarding the Executive Committee.

The next scheduled meeting of the Executive Committee will be at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Conference in Norfolk, VA, March 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> (<https://wildlifemanagement.institute/conference>)



## Joint Memo on New State Wildlife Action Plan Revision Guidance Signed

On December 5th, AFWA President Virgil Moore and FWS Principal Deputy Greg Sheehan signed a joint memo implementing new guidance for review and revision of State Wildlife Action Plans. The guidance, which will streamline revision of State Wildlife Action Plans, was drafted by a working group under the Wildlife Diversity Conservation and Funding Committee and approved at the AFWA Annual Meeting in September. Please share the new guidance with Wildlife Diversity Program Managers, State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators and other relevant staff in your agency.

## EPA Hosting WOTUS Webinar for State Fish and Wildlife Agencies

In response to AFWA's letter and request for greater state involvement in informing the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rules and regulatory processes, EPA is hosting a webinar for state fish and wildlife agency leadership and designated staff on January 9, 2018, from 2-3pm ET. Please check your email for participation instructions from Devin DeMario, [ddemario@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ddemario@fishwildlife.org).

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## Meetings with the Directorate and Zinke

On December 6th the Executive Committee had two important meetings in Washington, DC. The first was a three-hour session with the Directorate of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), its 25-member national leadership team. The meeting was dominated by three focal topics: how states can *collaborate* with the FWS on Department of Interior (DOI) Secretarial Order 3356, especially regarding enhanced priority for hunting and angling opportunities on National Wildlife Refuges, new opportunities for state-federal collaboration on landscape-level partnerships, and new state-federal opportunities for collaborative governance on fish and wildlife management, perhaps through a FWS-State MOU template. You will note the focus on collaboration – the spirit of which was fully embraced during the meeting – and President Virgil Moore is looking forward to having “architect’s drawings” or an actionable path forward for discussion at the North American. Indeed, Jim Douglas, Nebraska Director and Chair of the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee, has already stepped up to lead the work on landscape-level partnerships. We anticipate these opportunities to dominate discussion among state directors on Tuesday afternoon, March 27, 2018, in Norfolk, VA, followed by additional dialogue with FWS leadership later that day.

## Legislative Update

**The Farm Bill Is Coming** – The House Committee on Agriculture is expected to soon unveil and swiftly move its 2018 Farm Bill. The time to reaffirm your/our Farm Bill priorities and inform the final house draft bill is NOW. For additional information about AFWA's 2018 Farm Bill priorities, please contact Andrew Schmidt at [aschmidt@fishwildlife.org](mailto:aschmidt@fishwildlife.org).

**DOI Issues Opinion on Migratory Bird Treaty Act** – Late on December 22, 2017, the DOI issued a Solicitor's Opinion on the MBTA, more narrowly reinterpreting the treaty as only covering intentional take of a bird and stating that accidental or incidental take of a bird is not illegal.

**Congress Introduces Bills to Combat CWD** – On November 21, 2017, Representatives Kind and Sensenbrenner (both of WI) introduced H.R. 4454, the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Act of 2017, to support State and tribal efforts to address CWD among deer, elk, and moose populations, and to support applied research on CWD. The bill provides state departments of wildlife and agriculture and Tribes with \$35 million annually, to develop and implement management strategies \$10 million per year for applied research grants on CWD, and requires the DOI and USDA land management agencies to work cooperatively with States on CWD research and response plans. On December 19, 2017, Senator Tester (D-MT) introduced a similar bill (S. 2252), which provides \$25 million per year for applied research grants and limits the overhead rate on such grants to 15%. For more information, contact Jen Mock Schaeffer at [jenmock@fishwildlife.org](mailto:jenmock@fishwildlife.org).

**The Fight for States' Rights Continues** – Key Commerce Committee and Leadership members of the Senate continue to negotiate provisions for passing the Commercial Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (CVIDA/VIDA), which is currently included in the US Coast Guard reauthorization bill (S. 168, S. 1129, H.R. 1154). This bill raises considerable federalism issues and threatens states' rights to protect their unique state waters and natural resources against water pollution and the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, which states may regulate under state and federal laws. Your assistance in generating additional opposition to this legislation would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Devin DeMario at [ddemario@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ddemario@fishwildlife.org) for additional information.

**Wildfire-Borrowing and Forestry Reforms Still Elusive** – There was a huge end-of-year push through the appropriations process to resolve the wildfire budget-borrowing problem and address much needed forest management reforms. These provisions were not included in the Continuing Resolution that continues to fund the federal government until January 19, so our work continues.