

The AFWA Strategist

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

July 2018

AFWA Government Affairs

Farm Bill Moves to Conference- On June 14, the Senate Committee on Agriculture marked-up and passed with bipartisan support the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (S3092/HR2). AFWA priorities included are 10% of EQIP funds for wildlife practices and a contract length of up to 10 years for wildlife practices, continuation of the Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentives Program at \$40 million over 5 years, and policy improvements to the easements program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. On June 21, the House passed HR2, the Agriculture Improvement Act by a narrow vote of 213:211, and on June 28 by a bipartisan vote of 86:11, Senate passed its farm bill by the most affirmative votes in history. Conferees should be named soon to further negotiate bill differences.

Request for Senate Hearing on PR Modernization- The Senate Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC) leadership (Senators Risch, Manchin, Fisher, and Heitkamp) and sponsors of S1613, the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act, sent a letter to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) requesting to move the bill through legislative process. We will keep informed as we learn more about timing of those events.

Bills Proposing to Change the Migratory Bird Framework Generate Concern --Senator Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) introduced identical bills (S2942/HR6013) that would establish January 31 as the end of waterfowl, merganser and coot hunting seasons; hold seasons and bag limits at the 2017-2018 levels in perpetuity; and create a special season during the first week of February for youth, veterans, active duty military and members of the national guard. All four flyways and many state fish and wildlife agencies have expressed concern about the current text of the bills and the intervention of Congress in a successful, science-based process that is co-managed by state fish and wildlife agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We are constructively working with NGO colleagues and the bill sponsors to make improvements to the language. HR6013 is expected to have a legislative hearing the week of July 16 before being passed by the committee before the August recess.

Chronic Wasting Disease Gaining Attention— Rep. G.T. Thompson's (R-PA) floor amendment to make Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) a priority research issue for the agriculture extension service was adopted as part of the House farm bill. Senator Hyde-Smith (R-MS) had a similar CWD amendment focusing on free-ranging deer that was accepted during the Senate's committee mark-up. The CSC held a breakfast briefing on CWD which highlighted HR4454 and S2252, the Kind-Sensenbrenner and Tester bills on CWD, respectively, that provide more funding for CWD surveillance, monitoring and applied research.

Rep. Abraham Introduces CWD Transmission Study Bill -- On June 28, Rep. Abraham (R-LA) introduced the Chronic Wasting Disease Transmission in Cervidae Study Act (HR6272) along with Reps. G.T. Thompson (PA), Costello (PA), and Gosar (AZ). The bill directs the Secretary of Agriculture to contract with the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) to conduct a special resource study to identify the predominant pathways and mechanisms of the transmission of CWD in wild, captive, and farmed populations of species of the family Cervidae in the United States; identify significant gaps in current scientific knowledge regarding CWD transmission pathways; identify anthropogenic and environmental factors contributing to new CWD emergence events and geographic patterns of CWD distribution; identify and prioritize scientific research projects that will address the identified knowledge gaps; and review best management practices developed by state and federal agencies, the APHIS CWD Herd Certification Program, and other guidance regarding the management of CWD. The bill directs the NAS to complete the study within six months.

Senator Barrasso Unveils Discussion Draft bill to Modernize the ESA --On July 2, Chairman Barrasso (R-WY) of the Senate Committee on EPW released a discussion draft bill to modernize the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The bill is garnering support from a range of interests, including state fish and wildlife agencies from across the country. The bill aligns with many aspects of the Western Governors Association's recommendations on improving the ESA and is consistent with and reflective of many of AFWA's General Principles for Improving Implementation the ESA as well as testimony provided by several state directors to the committee during EPW hearings in 2017. State fish and wildlife agencies and regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies are encouraged to review the discussion draft bill and the section-by-section analysis which are posted to the EPW committee website.

A New Spin on VIDA: the Vessel Discharge Reform Act— AFWA staff received a new draft bill that is under the jurisdiction of the Senate EPW Committee, instead of Commerce as with VIDA, that seeks to address some of the concerns raised by states about the restriction, control, management and prevention of aquatic invasive species in ballast water and other introduction pathways. Once a bill analysis is complete, we will share more details.



**JOIN US IN FLORIDA FOR THE
2018 ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES ANNUAL MEETING**
SEPTEMBER 9-12 • TAMPA MARRIOTT WATERSIDE
HOTEL TAMPA, FL

**Registration is now OPEN for
AFWA's 2018 Annual Meeting in Tampa, Florida at
www.AFWAAnnualMeeting.org**

IUCN National Committee for the U.S. met on July 18 in DC

The IUCN National Committee for the US met on July 18 in DC. Lane Kisonak and Jonathan Mawdsley attended to represent the state fish and wildlife agencies. Participants discussed the mandate of the Committee; regional collaboration with Committee's in Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean; and Committee activities and priorities along with other issues. Once follow up actions and outcomes are available, we will develop a plan for participation and engagement by the state agencies and AFWA.

Cohort 12 Graduates

Congratulations to the alumni of Cohort 12 who completed their NCLI experience on June 21, 2018.

The 36 members of Cohort 12 join an ever-growing network of more than 420 conservation professionals.

#WildlifersEverywhere

Starting this July, AFWA is launching a summer social media campaign to promote the Project WILD program.

To learn more, check out Project WILD on the AFWA website.



New Employee!

We are pleased to announce that Maggie Ernest Johnson has joined the AFWA family as our new Adaptation Program Manager

We're Hiring!!

AFWA is accepting applications for the position of Agriculture Policy Program Manager. This person will work with state fish and wildlife agencies and other Association members to enhance fish and wildlife habitat and encourage sustainably-managed fish and wildlife resources through the reauthorization and implementation of conservation, forestry, bioenergy, and other provisions of the current and future Farm Bills. Visit www.fishwildlife.org/careers

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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.

www.fishwildlife.org

Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife

The campaign to advance the Recovering America's Wildlife Act continues to gain momentum in the House, and we look forward to working with you all to build support for the pending introduction of the companion Senate bill. We had assumed a Senate bill would be dropped before the July 4th recess, however, the Farm Bill and immigration policy took away staff capacity for many Senate offices, and formal action on RAWA was deferred until after the recess.

The House bill ([HR4647](#)) continues to gain bi-partisan support with 73 co-sponsors now signed on. We continue to meet regularly with our champions in the House and the House Natural Resources Committee Chairman and staff to work toward advancing the bill through the Committee in that chamber. We would like to thank you all for your continued support and strategic outreach to partners and congressional offices where appropriate, it is all helping. We now have supportive resolutions from all of the regional fish and wildlife associations and well over half of the states individually as well. Once the Senate bill is introduced we will reach out immediately with news and further guidance on legislative strategy to involve participation by the state agencies, Alliance partners and other stakeholders. We will be circulating a sign-on letter in support of the Senate legislation as soon as it is introduced.

There are new campaign resources available for download on the new [Alliance page](#) on our AFWA website, and a new [online sign-up form](#) available for organizations and businesses wanting to show support for the campaign by joining the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife. Please reach out with any questions on the campaign to Sean Saville, Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife Campaign Manager, ssaville@fishwildlife.org or (202) 838-2561.

Landscape and Conservation Working Group

AFWA's Landscape Conservation Working Group, under the leadership of Jim Douglas is working on implementing the recommendations of the white paper that was presented at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March. The working group is 1) working with FWS Regional Directors on processes to co-develop priorities for at-risk species and landscape conservation; 2) revising and expanding best practices for landscape conservation; 3) is drafting a resolution on landscape conservation for consideration at the AFWA Annual meeting; and 4) will be hosting a meeting with the Network for Landscape Conservation in Nebraska in August. An addendum to the white paper will be presented to Directors at the AFWA Annual Meeting in Tampa.

Senate Appropriations Committee Update

Several conservation grant programs received increases for FY2019 in the Senate Appropriations Committee spending bill. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program received a \$2M increase to \$65.5M and The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund a \$3M levels increase to \$43M.

The Administration proposed 50% and 12% cuts respectively for the two programs. The Senate bill included \$49.5 M for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund which is \$4M below FY18 and \$3.91M for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and \$425.0 M for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the same amount as last year for both programs. AFWA sent a letter to the Senate Interior Committee Chair and Ranking Member in June requesting increased funding levels.

CITES Animals Committee Meets July 16-21, 2018

Buddy Baker (Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries), Carolyn Caldwell (MAFWA CITES Technical Work Group Representative), Jim deVos (Arizona Game and Fish Department), Rick Jacobson (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) and Deb Hahn (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) will represent the state fish and wildlife agencies at the 30th Animals Committee 16-20 July, 2018 and the Joint Meeting held with the 24th Plants Committee on July 22nd. They will be engaging international partners on a number of topics including American eel, snake, coral, paddlefish, and turtle conservation; sustainable use of wildlife; the CITES Vision for the next 5 years; and traceability of wildlife in trade. The Regional Associations will receive a report after the meetings conclude.