

The AFWA Strategist

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

June 2018

AFWA Government Affairs

Farm Bill Passes Senate Ag Committee—On June 14, the Senate Committee on Agriculture marked-up and passed with bipartisan support the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. AFWA priorities included in the bill 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 as well as policy improvements to the easements program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The Senate committee leadership continues to work with Senator Thune (SD) on revisions to the Conservation Reserve Program including his proposal to cap payments at a percent of cash rental rates, modifying haying and grazing provisions, and limiting contract reenrollments. We expect a floor amendment to be brought forward for consideration once they reach agreement. Speaker McConnell intends to bring the bill to the floor for a vote before the July 4th Congressional recess, and the House is supposed to bring its farm bill back to the floor after the debate on immigration reform and before the July 4th recess.

Request for Senate Hearing on PR Modernization—The Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus leadership and the sponsors of S. 1613, 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 a hearing and moving the bill through legislative process. We will keep you informed as we learn more.

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 legislation (S. 2942/H.R. 6013) 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 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 working with NGO colleagues and the bill sponsors to make improvements to the language. H.R. 6013 is expected to be marked-up and moved out of committee in July.

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 and became part of the House farm bill before final passage on the bill failed a couple of weeks ago. Senator Hyde-Smith (R-MS), who succeeded recently retired Senator Thad Cochran, had a similar CWD amendment focusing on free-ranging deer that was accepted as part of the en block manager's amendment to the Senate farm bill. The Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus held a breakfast briefing on CWD which highlighted H.R. 4454 and S. 2252, the Kind-Sensenbrenner and Tester bills, respectively, that provide more funding for CWD surveillance, monitoring and applied research. Stand by – a new Congressional champion for combating CWD is emerging.

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**

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 are working closely with our lead Senate offices to look for the earliest opportunity to introduce the legislation in the Senate. The House bill ([HR4647](#)) continues to gain bi-partisan support with 66 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.

Annual Awards Call for Nominations

Please take a minute and think of a team or individual within your agency as well as private stakeholders who are deserving of national recognition for their outstanding work to advance fish and wildlife conservation.

**Nominations are due
June 30, 2018**

For awards criteria and nomination details, go to: www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-acts/annual-awards

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.



New Employee!

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

Senate Appropriations Committee Update

Several conservation grant programs received increases for FY2019 in the Senate Appropriations Committee pending 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.

Program	FY19 President's Request	FY19 House Appropriations Committee	FY19 Senate Appropriations Committee	F18 Enacted
State & Tribal Wildlife Grants	\$31.29 M (-50.0%)	\$63.571M	\$65.571M (+3.1%)	\$63.871M
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	\$33.60M (-11.9%)	\$42.0M (+5%)	\$43.0M (+7.5%)	\$40.0M
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund ¹	\$ 0.0M (-100.0%)	\$53.495M	\$49.495M (-7.5%)	\$53.495M
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund	\$3.9M (-0.26%)	\$3.91M	\$3.91M	\$3.91M
Multinational Species Conservation Fund	\$6.0M (45.7%)	\$11.061M	\$12.061M (+9.0%)	\$11.061M
Forest Legacy Program ¹	\$0.0M (-100%)	\$48.455M (-27.7%)	\$65.490M (-2.3%)	\$67.025M ²
Total Land & Water Conservation Fund	-\$37M in cancellations	\$360.0M (-15.3%)	\$425.0M	\$425.0M

¹ All or part included under Land & Water Conservation Fund
² Does not include \$5.938M rescission

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.

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.

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