

The AFWA Strategist

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

Spring 2018

AFWA Government Affairs

The 2018 Farm Bill is Here! – If everything goes as planned then as you read this the members of the House of Representatives, their staff, and the House Committee on Agriculture are busy preparing and reviewing amendments to its 2018 Farm Bill, which was expected to be introduced on April 12. A full committee mark-up of the bill is expected to begin the week of April 16, and floor time for passage of the bill is expected to occur in May.

Hearing in the House of Representatives for Two AFWA Legislative Priorities-

On February 15, the Federal Lands Subcommittee of the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on five bills, two of which were the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (HR 4647) and the Modernizing the Pittman Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act of 2017 (HR 2591). These are two of AFWA's highest legislative priorities. Testifying on both bills was Mr. Bob Ziehmer, Senior Director of Conservation for Bass Pro Shops. We continue to garner additional cosponsor support for both; HR 2591 has 27 cosponsors and HR 4647 has 45.

FY2018 Appropriations Omnibus Includes Great Accomplishments

Congress enacted a bipartisan omnibus appropriations bill to fund the federal government through FY2018. It is the result of a tremendous amount of work by our community and others to advance several key legislative and funding priorities. Thank you to all of our partners for helping to enact these great provisions. Here are a few highlights of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018.

- \$1.595 billion for the USFWS, which is \$75 million more than the FY17 enacted level, with \$53 million to address the maintenance backlog at wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries.
- \$425 million for the LWCF, which is \$25 million more than enacted for FY17.
- \$40 million for the NAWCA, which is \$1.85 million more than enacted for FY17.
- \$1 million increase for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants in the FY18 omnibus.
- \$5.93 billion for the USFS, a \$360 million (6.5%) increase over the FY17 enacted level.
- \$1.148 billion for the USGS, which is \$63 million more than the FY17 enacted level.
- \$5.9 billion for NOAA, a \$234 million increase - the majority for the National Weather Service, but some increases for NOAA Fisheries Programs such as monitoring.
- \$3.2 billion for the NPS, a \$255 million increase.
- \$874 million for USDA Conservation Operations, a \$9.6 million increase.
- A comprehensive wildfire funding fix and bipartisan forest management language.
- Permanent reauthorization of the Federal Lands Transaction Facilitation Act.
- Support for increasing access to public lands for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities.
- No Farm Bill Title II reductions in conservation program spending (first time in a decade).
- Establishment of the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm Production and Conservation at USDA.
- Significant limitations by Congress on reorganization proposals at DOI and EPA.

2016 National Survey Update

The 2016 national survey was discussed by AFWA leadership several times at the North American in Norfolk. Here is a summary of the key points:

- For the purposes of evaluation, two surveys were performed in 2016. The National Survey was performed by Census using the same methodology as previous surveys. State level surveys were performed by Rockville Institute.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service is finalizing its report on the National numbers and expects to release the report in April. These will be the official national numbers.
- Rockville Institute is finalizing state reports and those will be sent to the states with a request that states review them and let AFWA know how they would like the numbers to be published.
- AFWA is working with key stakeholders to develop communications about the differences between the 2016 National and State surveys.
- President Virgil Moore created a President's Task Force to determine the information needs of the states and other key stakeholders, which will help to inform future surveys beginning in 2021.





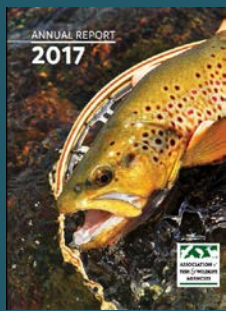
Annual Awards Call for Nominations

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



2017 Annual Report

The Association recently released its 2017 Annual Report in which we highlight 2017

as a year of conservation for the future and developing and strengthening conservation partnerships.

Download at www.fishwildlife.org

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Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (HR4647) now has momentum and stands a real chance of gaining traction and advancing through both chambers. This is partially attributable to the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife campaign and the diversity of partners that are committed to passing the legislation. We consistently hear in meetings on the Hill that Members are impressed with the coalition of sportsmen's and other conservation organizations aligned with energy industry and sporting retail businesses all aligned in their interest of seeing this legislation succeed. The Alliance grows every day and we certainly could always use help inviting additional members to join. As of the North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference (March 2018) we were up to 45 cosponsors and counting on the House bill (HR4647).

On the Senate side, again we had a number of very productive meetings with Senators that have expressed considerable interest in taking a leadership role on the companion legislation in that chamber. We are working to quickly secure bipartisan champions based on that intelligence gathered recently, and then move to get legislation introduced on the Senate side as soon as possible after the Easter recess to create a parallel track for the House bill.

We now have twenty-seven state resolutions passed in support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act/Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations with several states also sending letters of support where resolutions were not an option. Directors are strongly encouraged to meet with Members of their congressional delegations in the coming weeks.

USDA APHIS Changes CWD Program Standards

USDA APHIS has recently announced revisions to the USDA CWD Herd Certification Program Standards. The federal register notice for these revisions can be found at: <https://www.federalregister.gov> under notice # 2018-06341. Comments must be submitted via the federal register website on or before April 30, 2018. AFWA strongly encourage all interested state agencies and partners to submit comments directly to USDA APHIS in response to this notice. AFWA will also be submitting an overall set of comments reflecting the combined perspectives of state agencies. Copies of your agency's comments can be sent directly to Jonathan Mawdsley <jmawdsley@fishwildlife.org>

Landscape Conservation Working Group

The AFWA Landscape Conservation Working Group, chaired by Jim Douglas, was formed in December and charged with examining existing landscape partnerships and reviewing their governance structures, commonalities of success, approaches, partner roles and other attributes and synthesize into a white paper that identifies key challenges and lessons learned. The white paper was presented at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference to State Directors and at a joint meeting of State Directors and the FWS Directorate. The white paper included four recommendations which are being implemented by the working group. The white paper is available. The white paper can be found on our website www.fishwildlife.org on the Wildlife Resources Policy Committee Page.



NEW AFWA Website

Check out AFWA's NEW website at www.fishwildlife.org

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

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