

# The AFWA Strategist

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

Spring 2019

## AFWA Government Affairs

**WOTUS: Comment Extension Denied** -- The EPA/ACOE announced that the agencies will not extend the comment deadline for the proposed rulemaking to redefine the scope of federal authority under the Clean Water Act. All comments are due to EPA/ACOE on the proposed rulemaking by April 15<sup>th</sup>. AFWA staff are working with a subset of state agency directors and staff to develop draft comments, which you will receive to review the week of April 8<sup>th</sup>.

**FWS Proposes to Delist Gray Wolf** -- On March 13, the FWS proposed to delist the gray wolf across the lower 48 states, citing the best available scientific and commercial information indicates that the currently listed entities do not meet the definitions of a threatened species or endangered species under the ESA due to recovery. The deadline for submission of public comments is May 14, 2019. AFWA staff will host a conference call with Directors and state agency members of the Threatened & Endangered Species Policy Committee in April to discuss the rule and whether AFWA should submit public comments.

**Congressional Appropriations Season is Underway** -- AFWA submitted our appropriations recommendations on March 15 to the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies of the House Committee on Appropriations. As other subcommittee deadlines quickly approach, AFWA is working to meet those submissions deadlines with the best available information we have. Legislative and Federal Budget Committee Chair Tim Schaeffer (PA FBC) and AFWA staff are working to reinvigorate states' engagement in the Congressional appropriations recommendations process and involvement in AFWA's Annual Federal Budget Briefings. AFWA is hosting the briefings the week of April 15, although we have yet to confirm all our federal partners' participation. Remote participation will be available.

**Bipartisan Bills on Ocean Acidification Introduced in House and Senate** -- On March 13<sup>th</sup> bipartisan bills were introduced focusing on ocean acidification. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced [S. 778](#), and House Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) introduced the companion bill, [H.R. 1716](#). The Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act of 2019 seeks to amend the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act of 2009 and directs the Secretary of Commerce to conduct "coastal community vulnerability assessments" to study the growing impacts of acidification.

**House WOW Subcommittee Hears Conservation Legislation** -- On March 26, the House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a [legislative hearing](#) on the Modernizing Pittman-Robertson for Tomorrow's Needs Act ([HR 877](#)), a bill to create Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration parity for the US Territories ([HR 1809](#)), the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2019 ([HR 737](#)), a bill to implement the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels ([HR 1305](#)), other stand-alone bills, and the ACCESS Act ([HR1326](#)) which includes two Chronic Wasting Disease bills, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act, reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and others. The Association supports HR 1326 and HR877; we seek the states' perspectives on HR737 vs. HR 788, and on HR 1305; and AFWA opposes HR 1809.

**National Fish Habitat Bill Reintroduced** -- On March 13, Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA) and Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Chair Marc Veasey (D-TX) reintroduced the National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act ([HR 1747](#)) as a stand-alone bill. An advocacy toolkit soon will be released for all to use to help advance the bill.

**AFWA & Partners Announce SDM Training Courses on Species Distribution Modeling** -- The FWS and the USGS Cooperative Research Units in partnership with AFWA are hosting training courses for state fish and wildlife agency and USFWS personnel on Species Distribution Modeling (SDMs). The course will teach proper construction of SDMs that are needed to inform various management and policy decisions. The FWS will cover the costs of tuition, food, and lodging; the states need only pay for travel to/from the training. Two trainings are scheduled: May 6-10 in Bozeman, MT, and July 14-20 at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV. To register, please contact instructor Tom Edwards at [t.edwards@usu.edu](mailto:t.edwards@usu.edu). A decision-makers workshop on the proper interpretation and utilization of SDMs in management and regulatory decisions is expected at AFWA's Annual Meeting.



*Save the date...*

109th AFWA Annual Meeting  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
September 22-25, 2019  
[www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org)





## Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is soon to be introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. So that means we'll be ramping up much of our advocacy efforts and coalition building activities quickly in the coming weeks and months. We know many of you are on the frontlines of conservation in your states, and will be in a particularly good position to advocate, to the extent you are able, for the legislation and build durable public support as we advance the initiative. We'll want to work closely with you all and your staff on messaging, press outreach and education with your diverse partners and stakeholders that support the good work you're doing to sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations. So please help us generate positive media, get statements of support from partners in to their elected officials, and help us gather cosponsors on the bill once it is introduced in the House. We'll be sending more specific guidance on what you can be doing over the coming weeks and months to help advance the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. For more information on the campaign and if you are a partner organization interested in joining the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife, please go to [OurNatureUSA.com](http://OurNatureUSA.com). Please don't hesitate to reach out to Sean Saville, Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife Campaign Manager at [ssaville@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ssaville@fishwildlife.org)

## 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  
July 1, 2019**

For awards criteria and nomination details, go to:

[www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-acts/annual-awards/nominations-criteria](http://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-acts/annual-awards/nominations-criteria)



## 2018 Annual Report

The Association recently released its 2018 Annual Report in which we highlight 2018

year of 'almost' and a year of change. Download at [www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org)

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## CITES CoP Preparations Begin

The Eighteenth meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference of the Parties (CoP) will be held from May 23 – June 3, 2018 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The CITES Technical Work Group, which includes SEAFWA representative Buddy Baker, will attend and ensure that the views of US state fish and wildlife agencies are included in the decision-making process. The CITES Secretariat is beginning to [post documents here](#). Species proposals to amend Appendices I and II (i.e., listing, uplisting, downlisting or delisting a species) [are here](#).

Fauna species proposals for species native to the US include listing black teatfish (*Holothuria (Microthele) whitmaei*), Long and Shortfin Mako Sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus* and *Isurus paucus*), and American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) (the Mexican population) in Appendix II. There are other species proposals that the Technical Work Group will review for their potential impacts on sustainable use and livelihoods. Agenda topics of importance include the CITES Strategic Vision post-2020, rural communities, CITES and livelihoods, purpose codes, simplified procedures for permits and certificates, sturgeon and paddlefish, eels, and tortoises and freshwater turtles. Equally important will be the continued development of relationships with CITES partners and the promotion of sustainable use principles for the management and conservation of species.

## XXIV Trilateral Committee Meeting

The XXIV Trilateral Committee meeting will be held from April 8-11, 2019 in British Columbia. Logistical information and agendas can be found [on the website](#). The Trilateral Committee facilitates and enhances cooperation and coordination among the wildlife agencies of the United States, Canada, and Mexico in projects and programs for the conservation and management of wildlife, plants, biological diversity, and ecosystems of mutual interest. The current Trilateral Committee priorities include integrating human dimensions (engaging citizens and communities in nature); technology innovation for conservation (using technology for greater efficiency); connectivity (Terrestrial) and adaptation to ecosystem change. The state wildlife agencies from Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico participate annually. Other state agencies that have bi- or trinational conservation issues participate on an issue by issue basis. For more information, see the website or contact Deb Hahn ([dhahn@fishwildlife.org](mailto:dhahn@fishwildlife.org)).