

The AFWA Strategist

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

Spring 2015

AFWA Government Affairs

Reauthorization of the Sport Fish & Boating Trust Fund

On March 25, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation held a mark-up of S. 834, the Sport Fish Restoration and Recreational Boating Safety Act of 2015. The Manager's amendment unanimously adopted during the subcommittee mark-up is based on the Angling and Boating Alliance's draft proposal and AFWA's recommended changes.

There remain a few legislative improvements that must be made to the bill before it is brought to the floor for passage. However, with funding for the federal Highway Trust Fund and the current Transportation bill expiring at the end of May, it is highly possible that Congress will pass a short-term extension before a longer term funding solution is passed.

AFWA continues to work with Hill staff and others to finalize the legislative language and carve a path forward for passage, which will include maintaining the integrity of the Coastal Wetlands Program that funds a portion of North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) as well as critical wetland habitat conservation efforts in Louisiana.

Dear Colleague Letter Supporting the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program

From the House of Representatives, 147 members, and 41 members of the U.S. Senate signed Dear Colleague Letters supporting robust funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants programs in FY16. Congressmen Don Young (AK), Mike Thompson (CA), Frank LoBiondo (NJ) and Ron Kind (WI) led the letter in the House and Senators Mike Crapo (ID) and Sheldon Whitehouse (RI) led the letter in the Senate.

AFWA Legal Strategy

One of the goals of AFWA's Legal Strategy is to provide continuing legal education (CLE) seminars to lawyers on conservation law topics. AFWA's legal office delivered its first web-based CLE on the public trust in fish and wildlife on April 16 and 23 in partnership with the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG). Participants included AFWA member agencies' attorneys and NAAG members. Presenters included attorneys Braden Sheppard (NE), Larry Mellinger (DOI), Marty Bushman (UT), Bud Vielhauer (FL) and Mike Yaun (FL).

AFWA Legal Counsel Carol Bamberg's "Legal Issues with Energy and Wildlife" class at Michigan State Law is finalizing the second edition of the Wildlife Law Case Updates newsletter.

This summer, AFWA's legal office will have two to three law students interning in DC, and the Wisconsin DNR has invited one of Carol's students to intern. Two of Carol's fall 2014 wildlife law students did directed studies with Arizona and Utah. We are available to help place interns with state agencies or set up directed studies for legal projects on which states need assistance.



The Blue Ribbon Panel Holds Its 1st Meeting

The inaugural meeting of the *Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Fish and Wildlife Diversity* was held on March 25 in Aurora, Colorado. The meeting was led by co-chairs David Freudenthal and John L. Morris and was attended by 23 of the 27 panelists and ex officio members.

The meeting participants were engaged and are committed to finding a solution to the funding crisis facing fish and wildlife agencies. David Waller, former Director of Georgia Division of Wildlife kicked off the meeting with a history of fish and wildlife conservation and the Teaming With Wildlife initiative. The panelists agreed to operating procedures, a timeline, funding criteria and an initial set of funding options that will be analyzed by a third-party consultant to inform future discussions.

The Blue Ribbon Panelists will next meet in September in Missouri. To view the full list of Panelists, go to www.fishwildlife.org/blueribbonpanel.

The purpose of the Blue Ribbon Panel is to provide a forum for business and conservation leaders to discuss the future of fish and wildlife conservation and to review and agree on the best option for sustained and dedicated funding.

The desired outcome is to broaden investment in state-based fish and wildlife conservation to support proactive voluntary conservation on public and private lands to ensure sustainability for all species.



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AFWA Annual Awards

Help us recognize excellence in conservation by nominating a deserving individual or team within your agency as well as private stakeholders for national recognition. Nominations are due Friday, June 27th.

For awards criteria and nomination details, go to fishwildlife.org/annual_awards

AFWA Office Move Coming on June 1st

AFWA's DC office will be closed on May 29th and June 1st for our big move down the street to our new work habitat! Staff will be available by email during that time. We will be back up and running on June 2nd!

1100 First Street, NE
Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002

Sapelo II on the Horizon

In July 2014, a small group of Association and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) leaders met on Sapelo Island, GA in the spirit of advancing communications, improving relationships and crafting recommendations for healthy future collaboration. By all accounts, this was a successful session and a Sapelo II Retreat will be held in Montana in early May.

Focal areas of discussion will include the federal ESA and National Wildlife Refuges. State participants will be AFWA President Larry Voyles (AZ), Nick Wiley (FL), Dan Forster (GA), Jeff Hagener (MT), Virgil Moore (ID) and Ron Regan. Wendi Weber will be one of the participants representing the FWS. It is interesting to note, that WAFWA will partner with the FWS to replicate this retreat model at a regional scale.

2014 Farm Bill Field Guide

AFWA joined with the North American Bird Conservation Initiative to produce the **2014 Farm Bill Field Guide to Fish and Wildlife Conservation**. The field guide is a tool to assist the staff of federal and state agencies, NGOs, joint ventures and other conservation partners in implementing Farm Bill conservation programs. It is primarily designed for those who work collaboratively with private landowners and agricultural producers to improve soil health, water quality, as well as fish and wildlife habitat. It is available for download at www.fishwildlife.org/agricultural_conservation.

Trapping & Furbearer Management

A new article on Trapping and Furbearer Management in North American Wildlife Conservation by Bryant White, AFW's furbearer expert, with Thomas Decker, Michael O'Brien, John Organ and Nathan Roberts was recently published in the International Journal of Environmental Studies. Using a North American perspective, the article discusses how wild furbearers are sustainably managed, and how trapping plays a key role in that management. It is available online at: www.tandfonline.com/eprint/CDR5VektGJyXaQZ4J6Bx/full.

AFWA's Conservation Learning Campus

AFWA's Management Assistance Team is hosting two, two-hour webinars in May for conservation professionals. MAT's webinars offer a condensed, yet effective, learning opportunity through a live, instructor-led presentation, group discussion and Q & A. Register at www.matteam.org for *Creative and Critical Thinking* on May 7 and *Problem Solving and Decision-making* on May 14.

The Strategist Briefly

- AFWA signed a joint letter with the USFWS pledging increased collaboration on the conservation of Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. The letter encourages states to include Monarch butterflies in their State Wildlife Action Plans as well as implement voluntary, collaborative actions with partners to restore habitat for pollinators.
- The U.S. Forest Service issued a letter to regional foresters encouraging their engagement with AFWA.
- The National Wildlife Federation signed a resolution on March 29 during its annual meeting endorsing AFWA's National Conservation Education Strategy.
- AFWA representatives participated in the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, April 13-17 in San Diego, CA.
- Letters of Intent for the 2016 cycle of the Multistate Conservation Grant Program are due May 11.