

The AFWA Strategist

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

Summer 2019

AFWA Government Affairs

AFWA Submits Comments on Proposed WOTUS Rule: At the March 8th Business Meeting AFWA President Ed Carter selected a working group of geographically diverse state agency experts to discuss the proposed rule and its potential effects on state fish and wildlife agency operations and the resources they are entrusted to manage. Through multiple detailed discussions surrounding the proposed rule, individual state commentary and analyses, they identified areas of agreement among the state agencies. Through their assistance, AFWA submitted a detailed letter to the EPA and ACOE on April 15. [The letter can be viewed here.](#)

DOI Proposes to open 1.4M Acres to Hunting and Fishing: On June 5, Secretary Bernhardt announced a proposal outlining expanded hunting and fishing opportunities at 74 National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) and 15 FWS national fish hatcheries (NFH) managed by the FWS across more than 1.4 million acres. The proposal also seeks to align state and federal regulations. When published, the comment period will be open for 45 days.

Comment Period Open on Proposed Miscellaneous Farm Bill Rule – On May 6, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) published an interim rule on miscellaneous conservation provisions to align the forthcoming program rules with the 2018 Farm Bill. NRCS requests comments on various conservation programs, which are due July 5, 2019. You may submit comments on [Docket No. USDA-2019-0005](#) by visiting the www.regulations.gov.

Deadline to Comment on Delisting of Gray Wolf Fast Approaching -- On March 13, the FWS proposed to delist the gray wolf across the lower 48 states. On June 6, the FWS issued an [extension](#) of the comment period until July 15. AFWA intends to submit a letter supporting the delisting but will acknowledge that individual states may have differing views.

Dingell and Mast introduce Forage Fish Conservation Act -- On April 10, Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-M), Brian Mast (R-FL), Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Fred Upton (R-MI), Billy Long (R-MO), and Jared Huffman (D-CA) introduced [HR2236](#), the "Forage Fish Conservation Act." The bill is specific to federal waters and would provide a national definition for forage fish; assess the impacts a new commercial forage fish fishery; account for predator needs; require the consideration of forage fish when establishing research priorities; conserve and manage river herring and shad in the ocean; and preserve state management of forage fish fisheries that occur within their jurisdiction; and more. If you have concerns with this bill, please contact [Devin DeMario](#) immediately.

PR Modernization Strategies Continue-- AFWA staff assembled a strategic team of conservation partners to chart a path to enactment for HR 877. The plan includes developing key messages and support from a broad group of conservation organizations to garner more democratic support from strategic offices, meetings with House leadership and key sponsors, and introducing a Senate companion bill.

House Subcommittee Holds Hearing on CWD: On June 25, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold an oversight hearing entitled, "Chronic Wasting Disease: The Threats to Wildlife, Public Lands, Hunting, and Health." Witnesses planning to testify include Director Carter Smith (TX), Jason Sumners (MO), Dr. Krysten Schuler (Cornell Wildlife Health Lab), and Nick Pinizzotto (NDA).

House Poised to Advance Minibus Funding Bill – The House is on track to pass numerous budget bills by July, including a minibus of the Commerce-Justice-Science, Agriculture-Rural Development, Interior-Environment, Military Construction-Veterans Affairs, and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development budget bills for FY2020. Amendments ruled in order can be found [here](#).

Senate Begins Transportation Discussions on FAST Act as AFWA Finalizes Wallop-Breaux Reauthorization Platform—As an agreement between Congress and the President on a broad infrastructure package becomes less likely, lawmakers are focusing on reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act which expires in 2020. The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hosted a hearing on the FAST Act on June 19, and AFWA is working with its partners in the Angling and Boating Alliance to finalize a draft congressional platform for directors to review.



 DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

 ASSOCIATION OF
FISH & WILDLIFE
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SEPTEMBER 22-25 • INTERCONTINENTAL SAINT
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SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA**

**Registration is now OPEN for
AFWA's 2019 Annual Meeting in
Saint Paul, Minnesota at
www.AFWAAnnualMeeting.org**



Cohort 13 Graduates

Congratulations to the alumni of Cohort 13 who completed their NCLI experience on June 21, 2019 at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's, Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp outside of Dubois, WY.

Cohort 13 Fellows join an ever-growing network of more than 425 conservation professionals who have come together from natural resource related organizations across the nation to further develop their leadership capacity.



New Employee!

We are pleased to announce that Greg Pilchak has joined the AFWA family as our new Agriculture Policy Program Coordinator.

We're Hiring!

AFWA is accepting applications for the positions of Government Affairs Coordinator, Science Partnership Program Manager and Director of Leadership Development. For more information, visit www.fishwildlife.org/careers

Province of Manitoba Announces \$52 M GROW Fund to Support Watersheds

The Province of Manitoba, Canada, established the \$102 million Conservation Trust last year, and on June 11, 2019 they announced the GROW Trust, and a capital contribution of \$52.0 million, to support Ecological Goods & Services (EG&S) programming in Manitoba, including ongoing/annual payments to projects.

<https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?ite m=45394&posted=2019-06-11>

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Recovering America's Wildlife Act- Update

We are pleased to announce the Recovering America's Wildlife Act was introduced in the House **Friday, July 12th** by Reps. Dingell (D-MI-12) and Fortenberry (R-NE-01). AFWA's President, Ed Carter was on hand to make a statement on behalf of the Association at a press conference that morning. See here the Association's [press release](#) on the bill introduction. We encourage all states and partners to issue their own releases as well. Last Wednesday the Association and the National Wildlife Federation cosponsored a Capitol Hill briefing on the bill hosted by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. Director Sara Parker Pauley of the Missouri Department of Conservation represented AFWA at this event with her remarks. Now it really gets exciting! Please encourage your members and constituencies to generate contacts to their Members of Congress asking for cosponsorship of the legislation. If you would like to use the action portal on the Alliance site that allows folks to send a quick email to their Representative, feel free to do that at www.OurNatureUSA.com AFWA staff have prepared a number of helpful materials, including the Guidelines for States, the bill language, fact sheet and talking points on the bill changes, press materials, fact sheets, state resolutions, social media content, and more for your use and reference available on the **Alliance toolkit site here** Thank you for all your state agencies and organizations are doing to build support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. We look forward to working with you all to advance the bill toward passage this Congress. Please let us know what else we can do to assist, and don't hesitate to contact Sean Saville, Campaign Manager at ssaville@fishwildlife.org ; (202) 838-2561.

International Relations Updates and Requests

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) aims to promote "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources." CBD has initiated a process to develop the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The International Relations Committee is soliciting state involvement to comment on the Framework. Interested staff should contact Deb Hahn at dhahn@fishwildlife.org.

The 18th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties has been rescheduled in Geneva, Switzerland from 15 to 28 August 2019. The CITES Technical Work Group will represent state and where applicable territorial and provincial wildlife agencies.

The UK recently passed the UK Ivory Act that closed the UK elephant ivory market. They are considering whether to include others species in the Act such as narwhal, walrus, and woolly mammoth. A stakeholder consultation process and comment survey are open until August 22nd and available [here](#). They are seeking evidence to gain a fuller understanding of the issue. It invites submission of information through the online survey on the level of trade, sustainability and legality of any trade, and/or the management of the species. You are encouraged to submit any information that would be useful. Please reach out to Deb Hahn if you have any questions.

AFWA Annual Meeting Planning

Planning for the Annual Meeting in Saint Paul, Minnesota is going well. Thanks to Pat Rivers and the Department of Natural Resources team for assisting with the Plenary Session, Retreat, and other important activities and considerations. Fish and Wildlife Directors should plan to arrive on Saturday, September 21, in order to participate in a full day of meetings and events, beginning at 7.30 am, on Sunday, September 22. We anticipate spending part of Sunday with the senior leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The Plenary Session is entitled "Mountains and Small Stones: Advancing Relevancy One Stone at a Time." Speakers include Ms. Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director, USFWS, Dr. J. Drew Lanham (invited), 2019 Audubon Medal Winner, Clemson University, and Dr. Courtney Schultz, Park Rx America.