

# The AFWA Strategist

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

Spring 2022

## AFWA Government Affairs

**FY23/22 Appropriations Update:** On Monday, March 28, 2022, President Biden released his [FY23 budget proposal](#). An early analysis shows a commitment to fund several important conservation provisions, climate and wildfire response and prevention. Many Department of Interior programs are proposed for higher funding levels than the recently enacted FY22 Omnibus.

The overall DOI funding would be at \$18.1 billion, an increase from the \$14.1 billion in the FY22 Omnibus. Of note in Secretary Haaland's budget summary is support for congressional efforts to amend Title 18 of the Lacey Act to return the longstanding authority to prohibit interstate transport of injurious species.

A total of \$3.7 billion would go to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), with \$1.7 billion allocated for its resource management activities, an increase of over \$90 million from fiscal 2022. Within the USFWS budget \$20.4 million to the Candidate Conservation program; \$67.4 million for the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program; \$23.7 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund; \$46.5 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (NAWCA); \$7.9 million for the neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund; and \$82.4 million for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG) which is \$10 million over the fiscal 2022 Omnibus.

The Bureau of Land Management would receive \$1.4 billion, nearly \$100 million more than fiscal 2022. The budget proposes \$153.1 million for Wild horse and Burro Management which is up \$37.3 million from FY22; has requested \$158.5 million for Wildlife Habitat Management which is a \$25 million increase from the 2022 omnibus; BLM will continue to support for implementation of greater sage-grouse and sage steppe habitat conservation efforts, which will include reviewing and updating greater sage-grouse management in land-use plans; and \$92.6 million for Recreation Management, nearly a \$10 million bump over FY22.

The U.S. Geological Survey would receive \$1.9 billion, up from the \$1.4 billion allotted in the omnibus. Within the USGS budget \$25.5 million would go toward the American Conservation Stewardship Atlas; Cooperative Research Units (CRUs) would see a \$3.1 million increase over FY22 levels to \$28.2 million.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement would receive a total \$326 million for the Abandon Mine Land (AML) Reclamation fund. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides \$11.3 billion for grants to States and Tribes over the next 15 years to help address pollution on AML.

The Department of Agriculture budget includes funding for a number of Farm Bill conservation programs as well as USDA-APHIS. APHIS-WS would receive an additional \$8 million in funding in FY 23, for a total budget of \$141 million. Their budget proposes an increase for chronic wasting disease research, including, but not limited to, the persistence of causal agents of the disease in the environment.

The Association will be reviewing the recently released final FY22 Omnibus report language, assessing the FY 23 budget proposal, and comparing it to our FY23 testimony. Following this review, we will be able to better inform our [FY23 priority asks](#) as the FY23 Appropriation process begins in earnest.

**Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Update:** The Association is working to develop a proposed approach to implement the motion adopted at the Business Meeting last week in Spokane. As you recall, the Directors adopted a motion for the ExCom to "consider standing up an ad-hoc group of experts to address challenges and opportunities with BIL implementation." This was intended to cut across committees given the wide scope of the Act from fish passage to wildlife crossings, and as broad as "ecological resiliency and restoration". We will be sharing more details in the coming weeks as to what this group of experts and effort looks like. While much focus until now has been on FY22, with 5 years of funding, there is a lot of work to do to set up programs that delivers conservation into 2023 and beyond.

**COMPETES Act/Lacey Amendments Moving:** The [America COMPETES Act of 2022](#) is headed to conference committee to resolve differences between House and Senate versions, after the Senate passed the bill on Monday, March 28 by a vote of 68-28. While the bill is considered passed by both chambers, vast majority of the Senate's bill is identical to the [United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021](#) passed by the Senate last Summer. AFWA is still finalizing its position on the House version of the COMPETES Act and its Lacey Act amendments in particular. Current expectations are that it is unlikely a final measure will be conferenced before the end of May.

**AFWA Supporting Duck Stamp Legislation:** During the Business Meeting at the North American, the states voted to adopt the report and recommendations of the Federal Duck Stamp Task Group, including a resolution for AFWA to communicate with the Director of the USFWS expressing the need to address the 45-day expiry period of the Electronic Duck Stamp, and furthermore, that the Association take immediate actions, along with partner organizations, to encourage Congress to amend the legislation necessary to make the Electronic Duck Stamp valid for the entire waterfowl hunting season.

**Farm Bill Platform Finalized:** At the North American Conference, AFWA's [Farm Bill Platform for 2023](#) was finalized. We would like to thank our now-former Agriculture Policy Coordinator, Greg Pilchak, for his diligent work throughout the development and finalization of the platform.

**Proposed Listing – Northern Long-Eared Bat:** On March 22, 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [announced a proposal to reclassify the northern long-eared bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act](#). AFWA encourages individual states to comment, and asks that you please advise if you would like to see us engage. The Service will hold a virtual public informational meeting from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Central Time, followed by a public hearing from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Central Time, on April 7, 2022. [Register for the virtual public meeting and hearing](#). Comments on the proposal may be submitted through May 23, 2022. AFWA encourages individual states to engage and stands ready to support the states in their comments. Please let us know how we can be of assistance.



*Save the date...*

112th AFWA Annual Meeting  
Omni Hotel  
Forth Worth, Texas  
September 18-21, 2022



[www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.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, 2022**

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)



## 2021 AFWA Annual Report

The Association recently released its 2021 Annual Report in which we focus on building resilience and the power of adaptation.

Download at [www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org)

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## Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife

We enjoyed seeing folks again live and in person at the North American in Spokane where the Recovering America's Wildlife Act was front and center across the conference. From the opening of the plenary session to the guest speaker's comments to the [special recorded video sent in by the bill's Senate sponsors Sens. Heinrich and Blunt](#), the enthusiasm created by the positive forward momentum of the bill right now is palpable. We had the chance to speak with directors and partners about the latest updates on the bill and we look forward to continuing the conversation at NEAFWA as well. It is an exciting time for the [legislation](#) and the [coalition](#) responsible for getting us here within striking distance of getting the bill across the finish line...so let's work together to get it done!

We are at a critical juncture in the campaign's trajectory, with a markup in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) imminent, likely on Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. We appreciate everyone's continued engagement and outreach, especially to the Senate offices of [members of the EPW committee](#). Right now and leading up to the markup on the 7<sup>th</sup>, demonstrations of support for the bill from states and partners, and communications to those committee members will be particularly helpful and important. We are optimistic that we will be able to successfully navigate this next markup with a bipartisan vote, which will then position the bill well for quick movement toward the Senate floor. We will need to continue to keep up the pressure in the House as well and chart the path forward to the floor in that chamber. As always, please reach out to Sean Saville, AFWA's Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife Campaign Manager, with any questions at [ssaville@fishwildlife.org](mailto:ssaville@fishwildlife.org); 202-838-2561. Thank you all for your continued support and partnership.

## International Relations

The CITES Technical Work Group (Team) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies and where applicable the Provinces and Territories at the meetings of the 74th Standing Committee (SC). There were over 400 delegates and observers. Click [here](#) for information on the key outcomes of the meeting. Please join us for a **virtual International Relations Committee meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>** from 2:00 to 4:00 pm ET to discuss outcomes of recent CITES and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meetings, preparations for the 2022 CITES Conference of the Parties, updates from the Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee, AFWA's IUCN engagement, and more. Click [here](#) for a meeting invitation and zoom link and other meeting information. **Join us for the first webinar in Southern Wings webinar series: Full life-cycle Conservation of Priority SGCN Migratory Birds in Guatemala and Ecuador** Southern Wings and American Bird Conservancy are excited to invite you to the inaugural webinar showcasing work that Southern Wings partners have been supporting to advance the conservation of shared priority migratory birds on the non-breeding grounds in Latin America. Learn about the conservation of species such as Cerulean Warbler, Canada Warbler, Wood Thrush, Olive-sided Flycatcher and more. [We hope you can join us!](#)

## Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force

The AFWA & FWS Joint Task Force on Landscape Conservation met at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March. Members of the task force include Tony Wasley (Co-chair), Brad Loveless, Eric Sutton, Mark Tisa, Martha Williams (Co-chair), Deb Rocque, Matt Hogan, Amy Lueders, and Wendi Weber. Ron Regan and Olaf Jensen serve as an ex officio members. The task force discussed a vision, mission, outcomes, and short-term actions that will support and coordinate a durable system of collaborative, voluntary, landscape conservation regional committees to leverage capacity, funding investments, align policies, share information, and connect to national opportunities. The importance of communicating the activities of the joint task force to all Directors was discussed and agreed to. The next meeting will likely take place in April.