

Exhibit 15
Tuesday

The AFWA Strategist

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

June-July 2015

AFWA Government Affairs

Reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund (SFRBTF)

After years and multiple attempts, AFWA and the Angling & Boating Alliance (ABA) failed to reach a compromise position on the level of increased funding and continued annual CPI increases provided to the USFWS for administration of the SFRBTF. Consequently, the Senate Commerce Committee marked-up and passed out of committee the U.S. Coast Guard reauthorization bill on June 25, S. 1611, that included S. 834, as reported out of committee as the policies moving forward for the SFRBTF. The ABA will continue to work with Senate commerce Committee staff on the language and a floor strategy.

Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations

On June 16, the House Committee on Appropriations marked-up and passed the FY2016 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. On June 18, the Senate Committee on Appropriations marked-up and passed its version of the Act—the first time in six years this Committee was able to pass this bill. The House bill was brought to the floor on June 24 and amended by voice votes. All amendments and final passage that requires recorded votes will be postponed until the House returns from recess the week of June 6.

State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program FY16 Funding

House and Senate Appropriations Committees approved slight increases for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program in FY16. The Senate Committee agreed to increase funding to \$60.571M and the House Committee to \$59.195M. Report language in the House bill stipulates that the additional funding be used for competitive grants to the states and directs the USFWS to focus all state competitive grants on species found to be warranted but precluded or proposed for federal ESA listing. The House report encourages states to do the same with formula grants. This is a major departure from the original intent of State and Tribal Wildlife Grants. Similar language was not included in the Senate bill. AFWA staff will be working with congressional staff to keep the program as flexible as possible for the states.

ESA Petition Rule

AFWA held a conference call on June 11 to discuss the USFWS' proposed rule on ESA petitions and what it means to state agencies. AFWA has compiled states' comments and will host another call on Monday, July 13 from 3:30-5:30pm EST. AFWA requested a 30-day extension of the comment period to accommodate AFWA's processes and anticipated WAFWA discussions, but the FWS is likely to issue a 60-day extension because of multiple extension requests.

Appropriations Amendment & MBTA/BGEPA

AFWA is exploring how an appropriations amendment introduced by Congressman Duncan (SC) would affect, if at all, states' authority to manage and prosecute violators under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act,



AFWA Annual Meeting

> Registration is now open for AFWA's 2015 Annual Meeting in Tucson, AZ at www.AFWAAnnualMeeting.org.

> Please make your hotel reservation at the JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass by August 24 to receive the reduced room rate.



The NCLI

> Congratulations to the graduates of the National Conservation Leadership Institute's Cohort 9!

> Cohort 10 Fellows will be announced in early August.

www.fishwildlife.org



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AGENCIES



AFWA Annual Awards

Last call for Annual Awards nominations! The nomination deadline has been extended to July 8th! For awards criteria and nomination details, go to fishwildlife.org/annual_awards

Monthly AFWA Legislative Affairs Conference Call

State directors and their designated staff are invited to join a monthly conference call with AFWA's Government Affairs Director, Jen Mock Schaeffer, on the second Tuesday of every month at 1pm ET to discuss Congressional legislation, your issues and concerns and AFWA's actions and advocacy efforts. Please dial 866-814-9555 (U.S. and Canada); conference code #2879448841.

AFWA has Moved...

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Appropriations Amendment & MBTA/BGEPA (cont'd)

and what violations would go unaddressed as a result of the amendment. Discussions surrounding the amendment are tied to the recent USFWS notice of intent concerning incidental take of migratory birds. AFWA is drafting a letter to send to Congressman Duncan explaining varied state concerns and commitment to work with him on his energy bill HR 493 as well as to be actively engaged in the NOI process.

Blue Ribbon Panel Listening Sessions

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Fish and Wildlife Resources will be holding two listening sessions this summer to gather input from conservation organizations, trade associations and the business community on the best approaches for funding fish and wildlife conservation. A solicitation for written testimony has been distributed to more than a hundred organizations and businesses. Approximately 15 individuals will be selected to speak before a subset of the Blue Ribbon Panel on July 23 at the Florida House on Capitol Hill. A second listening session for the energy sector is planned for late August in Texas.

The second meeting of the Blue Ribbon Panel will take place Sept 22 to 24 at Big Cedar Lodge in Missouri.

Legal Strategy

AFWA's legal department released the second issue of its Wildlife Law Call Case Updates newsletter in late May focused on cases with an energy nexus or issue. Later this summer, AFWA's two law clerks will produce the third issue.

Carol Bamberg and Parks Gilbert had promising visits with faculty at the University of Denver, Drake Law School, the University of Georgia and Pace Law School to build partnerships for connecting students with internships; offering seminars on conservation law and legal careers; and potentially delivering Carol's courses.

In partnership with the Sacramento Barrister's Club, Carol and Parks with Ann Malcolm of the California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife will host a Continuing Legal Education seminar on Conservation Law on July 16.

MAT Summer Term of Online Courses

Registration for MAT's summer online courses and webinars is now open through July 3. MAT's online courses and webinars are designed to help state agencies and their partners with the organizational challenges they encounter while managing national resources today. Courses include: Conservation Communications Strategies; Adaptive Leader I; Adaptive Leader II; What Great Managers Know; and Public Involvement in Conservation (webinar). Register at www.matteam.org/register.

Save the Date: CITES Webinar on 9/24

The CITES Technical Work Group will host an introductory webinar about the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora and other treaties (e.g., Ramsar, Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.) on September 24 from 1-3pm EST. More information and registration for the webinar is available at www.fishwildlife.org/files/CITESWebinarRegistration.pdf.

The Strategist Briefly

- Dr. Judith Scarl has joined AFWA as our new Bird Conservation/NABCI Coordinator.
- AFWA is seeking donated artwork from state agencies for our new DC office.
- AFWA's Executive Committee will meet in Hell's Canyon, ID on July 7-8 to discuss strategic planning, business planning, government affairs strategy and other topics.