

The AFWA Strategist

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

Summer 2019

AFWA Government Affairs



**JOIN US IN MINNESOTA FOR THE
2019 ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES ANNUAL MEETING**
SEPTEMBER 22-25 • INTERCONTINENTAL SAINT
PAUL RIVERFRONT HOTEL •
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

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

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 5th 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 6th 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 15th. 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 10th Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-MI), 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 Tuesday, 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 19th, and AFWA is working with its partners in the Angling and Boating Alliance to finalize a draft congressional platform for directors to review.



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



New Employee!

We are pleased to announce that Greg Pilchak will join 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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Founded in 1902, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance science-based management and conservation of species and their habitats for the public's long-term benefit and use. www.fishwildlife.org

Recovering America's Wildlife Act Update

Summer is upon us and that means folks are getting outside to recreate and share time in nature with family and friends. It also means that July 4th and August congressional recess periods are right around the corner, providing great opportunities to get Members of Congress and their staff out to see the great fish and wildlife conservation work states are doing, and what you could be doing with increased funding. As we near introduction of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act in the coming weeks, it will be increasingly more important to draw some attention to the innovative projects you're working on to prevent species from becoming endangered and also to recover those species that are already at-risk and in decline. Let us know if you're interested in hosting a field tour with other partners to get decision makers from your state out to see wildlife successes and challenges at work in your states. We would be happy to work with you on planning an outing and helping to tell the states' stories. This is one of many of the anticipated strategies we hope to employ to educate the public about the need for increased fish and wildlife conservation funding, included in the [Guidelines for States on Recovering America's Wildlife Act Engagement](#) that were distributed last month. Thank you for your continued support and guidance as we ramp up efforts on the legislative front. For more information about any of this, please contact Sean Saville, AFWA's Campaign Manager, at ssaville@fishwildlife.org; 202-838-2561.

International Relations Updates and Requests

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is a legally binding instrument that 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." The U.S. is not a signatory to the CBD; therefore, the state fish and wildlife agencies are not directly impacted by decisions. However, the Convention impacts the conservation of shared migratory species and national policies making it important that we engage. Canada and Mexico are signatories to CBD and have considerable engagement. CBD has initiated a process to receive input on and develop the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. It is a stepping stone toward achieving the 2050 Vision. The International Relations Committee is soliciting state involvement in the review and comment on a discussion paper focusing on possible elements of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Comments and input will be accepted until mid-August. Please have interested staff contact Deb Hahn at dhahn@fishwildlife.org or 202-838-3458.

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

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 on Monday morning will focus on relevancy from several scales under the title of "Mountains and Small Stones: Realism and Change." Confirmed speakers include Ms. Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director, USFWS and Dr. Drew Lanham, 2019 Audubon Medal Award Winner and Clemson Professor.



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