



NWTF ON THE HILL

The NWTF took many opportunities in the fall to represent our members at the national level. In October, NWTF Director of Government Affairs Joel Pedersen met with U.S. Department of Agriculture officials and key congressional staffers to promote the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative and our partnership with the USDA Forest Service. He also worked to garner support for inclusion of Pittman-Robertson Modernization Act language in end-of-year legislation; it was included within an appropriations bill and passed into law at the close of the legislative year. In November, Pedersen represented the NWTF at the National Assembly of Sportsmen Caucuses annual meeting. Industry partners and NGO representatives met with bipartisan legislators and leaders from state fish and wildlife agencies nationwide to discuss advancing sportsmen and women opportunities, and ensuring the advancement of science-based conservation policies. Pedersen presented information on how federal highway transportation and other funding affects access to federal lands for recreation, conservation and wildfire management.

MODERNIZING THE PITTMAN-ROBERTSON FUND FOR TOMORROW'S NEEDS ACT

The NWTF was pleased to see the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act signed into law at the end of 2019. This bill provides greater flexibility for state agencies to use Pittman-Robertson funds for hunter R3 efforts. Throughout the process the NWTF spoke with many representatives in both chambers to encourage the passage of this legislation. We worked with multiple NGOs, on behalf of our members, to advance this bill and help to secure funding for future conservation efforts.

RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT

Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 3742) advanced in December of last year and awaits a floor vote in the House. As of February 2020, the cosponsor list stands at 170. The bill proposes directing \$1.4 billion annually from existing Treasury funds to state wildlife agencies to protect at-risk species and habitat through proactive management. The NWTF is continuing to work for the advancement of this important legislation.

AMERICA'S CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACT

America's Conservation Enhancement Act (H.R. 925) passed the senate and was referred back to the house for final approval. This bill package reauthorizes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; it also, allocates funds to monitor CWD and combat the threat of invasive species. The NWTF continues to support this package by signing on to and sending multiple letters to both chambers for the passage of this legislation.

PRIORITIES FOR THE 116TH CONGRESS (SECOND SESSION)

As we move into a new year and new legislative session, the NWTF is crafting legislative priorities for the 116th Congress. They will be shared with officials to better communicate the significant issues and policies that our organization cares about. These priorities primarily relate to enhancing funding and providing tools for the Forest Service and other land management agencies, which include:

- Securing higher infrastructure funding levels for the Forest Service to improve access to public lands and address maintenance backlogs.
- Encouraging Congress to amend the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act to direct a minimum 10% of funding toward Forest Service infrastructure needs
- Increasing budget levels over FY20 levels to provide the capacity and capital to carry out forest restoration and wildlife conservation work on the ground
- Acquiring full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund that conserves wildlife habitat and provides public access on federal lands
- Expansion of the 2018 Cottonwood fix to provide a statutory solution that encompasses all four "re-initiation" factors, current law does not address "new information," which is leading to widespread injunctions on forest management activities
- Expansion of the Good Neighbor Authority to all federal lands and allowing revenues received from GNA timber sales to be used toward related work on all lands
- Garnering support for the finalization and implementation of the Forest Services's proposed rule for NEPA compliance that provides necessary tools and will streamline processes for critical forest restoration projects.

FIELD NOTES



FEATURED STATE: MICHIGAN

The state chapter supported the veto of H.B. 4687, a bill that circumvented the authority of the state Department of Natural Resources and sound science by legislatively setting regulations on the management and method of take for game species. If passed, the legislation would have set a dangerous precedent for establishing future wildlife management regulations. The state chapter also opposed a line item veto of a provision that would limit the state's ability to provide payments in lieu of property taxes to local governments. Limiting these payments significantly reduces local government revenue streams and undermines the incentive to protect this vital land for public hunting access and conservation efforts.

STATE UPDATES

California: The state chapter sent a letter opposed to A.B. 1254 (Bobcat Hunting Prohibition Bill), a legislative action prohibiting bobcat hunting without the input of sound science and wildlife agencies. The bill passed and was signed by the governor. • The state chapter also sent support letters pertaining to A.B. 1111, a bill establishing an outdoor recreation account, and S.B. 474, which establishes a habitat conservation fund. Both bills are still active in the legislature.

Florida: The state chapter submitted a letter to the Florida DOT in opposition of the Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance Program, which includes the proposed construction of three new toll roads through mostly undeveloped and rural areas of Florida.

Indiana: Regional Director Matt Underwood testified to the Legislative Summer Study Committee to support DNR forestry efforts and to the Natural Resource Commission regarding listing ruffed grouse as endangered, as well as turkey regulations and season dates.

Iowa: State board member Fred Long testified on behalf of the Iowa NWTF in support of a 1% sales tax to fund \$150 million annually for water quality and conservation work.

Kansas: The state chapter provided testimony to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism supporting the agency's recommendation for fall and spring turkey harvest reductions. Similar verbal testimony was provided at their November commission meeting in Scott City. The commission accepted the staff recommendation for spring harvest reductions but amended the recommendation to suspend the fall season and instead just shortened the season length.

Minnesota: The state chapter passed a resolution supporting agency proposed changes to the turkey season. The changes ended the lottery for hunting permits and made unlimited permits available over the counter; changes also allow hunters to hunt statewide rather than in a designated zone for spring turkey hunting season.

Missouri: The state chapter submitted a letter of support for the feral hog hunting closure in Mark Twain National Forest. • The 2020 Governor's Spring Youth Turkey Hunt was announced at the Parson Family Fall Festival held at the Governor's Mansion gardens.

Nebraska: The state chapter provided testimony to the Nebraska Legislative Executive Committee in support of the state's acquisition of the Charcoal Creek Property in the Black Hills-Pine Ridge Focal Landscape. The chapter committed \$15,000 towards the acquisition.

New Jersey: A New Jersey Fish and Game Council member solicited advice from the state chapter about potential regulation changes considered by the agency involving shotgun gauge size and the use of TSS shot.

Pennsylvania: The state chapter provided a letter of support for Bill 147, a proposal to authorize the state Game Commission to regulate Sunday hunting. As a result, this legislation allows the commission to allocate three days of Sunday hunting for the first time. • NWTF Biologist Kristin Giger, who lives in Pennsylvania but works on projects in New York, was appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate to the Pennsylvania Game Commission board.

South Dakota: The state chapter testified to the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission in opposition to a proposal that would reinstate rifles as legal equipment for spring turkey hunting in the West River Prairie units.

Texas: The state chapter contributed funding for a public awareness campaign conducted by the Texas State Parks Coalition, which resulted in the passage of Proposition 5 – a ballot initiative that provides dedicated funding to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for maintenance and development of state park land and historic sites through a sporting goods sales tax. Revenues from this tax are estimated to generate \$250-\$300 million annually for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The American Hunting Heritage Fund matched the chapter's contribution.