



HUNTERS ON THE HILL

NWTF ON THE HILL

The NWTF has recently been involved in multiple important conservation bills. NWTF CEO Becky Humphries sent a letter to key senators urging passage of a supplemental disaster funding bill to repay Forest Service accounts from 2018 “fire borrowing.” NWTF also provided recommendations for the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill Forestry Title to USDA Undersecretary James Hubbard. NWTF Director of Government Affairs Joel Pedersen met with numerous House Natural Resources Committee members to encourage support of the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act (H.R. 877), which was reintroduced by Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., this year and will allow Pittman-Robertson funds to be used for hunter and recreational shooter R3 efforts. Pedersen also met with Congressman Bruce Westerman, R-Ark., to discuss the NWTF’s priorities for the new Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2019, including increased categorical exclusions for forest management and wildfire resistance, plus a pilot arbitration program to resolve disputes over forest management.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT

Congress passed the Natural Resources Management Act (S. 47), which includes many important provisions for conservation and outdoor recreationalists across the nation. Some of these include:

- Permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which encourages public and private partnerships to protect America’s land and water resources, and improves outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Reauthorization of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore and conserve fish and wildlife habitats.

The bill also requires federal land management agencies to identify outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands and clarifies that all Bureau of Land Management and National Forest System land is open to hunting unless explicitly closed.

CONVENTION ROUNDTABLE

The NWTF hosted a roundtable during its National Convention with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, USDA Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen, Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Matthew Lohr and multiple conservation organization leaders to fellowship and discuss the USDA agencies’ priorities for the upcoming year.

ACCESS ACT

NWTF voiced support for another sportsmen’s package of legislation: the Authorizing Critical Conservation and Enabling Sportsmen and Sportswomen (ACCESS) Act (H.R. 1326). Provisions include:

- Reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which encourages partnerships to conserve wetland habitat and wildlife while producing a variety of environmental and economic benefits.
- Reauthorization of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Program, which provides grants for conservation efforts focusing on at-risk species, habitat enhancement and community-based stewardship.
- Permanent establishment of the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council Advisory Committee, a panel of conservation and industry leaders tasked with advising the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior on wildlife and habitat conservation, hunting and recreational shooting.
- Funding for research and management of Chronic Wasting Disease.

FIELD NOTES



FEATURED STATE

South Carolina: State legislators spent the session working to change the turkey hunting season structure after a 4-year study by the DNR on the state's declining turkey population. State chapter board members testified in support of the South Carolina DNR's turkey season recommendation (state-wide April 10 opener) seven times in the House and Senate, and members sent almost 5,000 messages to legislators. Legislation passed that sets the 2020 turkey season at April 1 – May 10 in the upstate and March 22 – April 30 in the low country. The legislation also sets turkey tag fees and adjusts daily bag limits to one bird per day, and one bird in the first 10 days of the season in each game zone.



STATE UPDATES

Connecticut: The state chapter opposed SB 245, which would have prohibited hunting along the Quinnipiac River in New Haven.

Iowa: The state chapter opposed HF 542 and SF 548, companion legislation in the House and Senate, which would restrict the ability of the state to purchase new land for public use. The Senate version passed and was signed into law. • State chapter leaders contacted their senators in opposition of HF 716, which would remove current straight wall cartridge restriction and allow minors to hunt deer with pistols if accompanied by an adult. • The state chapter continued its support for legislation to fund the Iowa Water and Land Legacy program.

Illinois: The state chapter supported legislation to allow individuals to use apprentice hunting licenses for up to three years, which passed the House and will be heard in the Senate.

Indiana: Members contacted their senators using the NWTF's advocacy platform to oppose Amendments 1 and 3 to SB 363, which would have created a commission to guide forest management activities and set aside 10 percent of each state forest from timber harvest. These amendments were killed in committee.

Kansas: The state chapter opposed provisions in HB 2167 that would require the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism to establish a system to approve and administer the transfer of regular landowner or tenant big game permits to nonresidents for hunting white-tailed deer.

Minnesota: Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and new Minnesota DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen were first-time participants in the Governor's Mentored Turkey Hunt. The NWTF helped organize this event and Director of Development Tom Glines guided Commissioner Strommen on a successful turkey hunt.

Mississippi: The state chapter opposed efforts to change language regarding hunting turkey over bait and urged the Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Commission to keep and enforce existing law. No changes were made.

Missouri: The 11th Annual Governor's Youth Turkey Hunt hosted 22 new hunters. • The Missouri Prescribed Fire Council met to discuss language for a bill to reduce liability associated with burning on private land • State members urged their representatives to oppose HJR 18, which requires the Conservation Sales Tax to be renewed every six years.

Nevada: The state chapter participated in the "Taste of Nevada" wild game luncheon for senators, assembly members and staff. The event hosted 150 attendees.

New Jersey: State chapter leaders participated in a partnership meeting with the state's FWS Refuge team.

New York: Doug Little, NWTF director of conservation Operations, participated in meeting with Assemblyman Brian Miller and his staff regarding a proposed private landowner swap of land with New York Department of Environmental Conservation. • Chapter leaders collaborated with other conservation organizations to develop talking points in opposition to AB 1413, which would prohibit firearms as prizes in any game of chance. This legislation would have directly affected NWTF's fundraising events.

Ohio: The state chapter and Ohio members promoted DNR's proposed hunting and fishing fee increases to legislators.

Oklahoma: State chapter members used the NWTF's advocacy platform to contact their legislators in opposition of HB 2324, which would allow nonresident landowners to obtain combination hunting/fishing licenses for the same price as resident combination licenses. This bill was killed in Committee. • The state chapter opposed SB 566, which would allow private hunting guides to use public land. The bill passed through legislature but was vetoed by Gov. Kevin Stitt.

Pennsylvania: The state chapter supported HB 808, which gives the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission the ability to set license fees.

Texas: The state chapter is monitoring an appropriations rider that would redirect Upland Game Bird Stamp funds from their intended uses on multiple species to being focused solely on quail.