THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT (H.R.1957)
The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law by President Trump on August 4th. This landmark law provides $900 million in permanent annual funding for land and water access and conservation and creates a 10-year fund to address the deferred maintenance backlog on federal lands. A priority of the NWTF, we worked hard to increase the portion received by the USDA Forest Service and for the bill’s passage. The NWTF is already engaged with the federal agencies to suggest guidelines and priority projects.

RECOVERING AMERICA’S WILDLIFE ACT (H.R. 3742)
This NWTF priority passed the House of Representatives as part of the House transportation and infrastructure bill. If enacted, wildlife agencies will share $1.3 billion annually to implement their State Wildlife Action Plans to restore vulnerable species before they need to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. We continue to advocate for this bill in the Senate, encouraging them to find a way to include the bill, or portions, in legislation that will pass this Congress. This bill compliments the Great American Outdoors Act by providing critical funding to the state agencies for management of wildlife.

FORESTRY GUEST WORKERS
The NWTF, along with other conservation organizations, sent a letter to the Secretaries of State, Labor, and Homeland Security urging the Administration to provide an exemption to the ban on guest workers for conservation and forestry-related jobs. Most forest planting depends on these workers, and without the exemption, forest restoration likely would come to a standstill. Only about 2 percent of available jobs are filled by U.S. workers each year. The exemption was granted.

FOREST RESTORATION
The NWTF continues to work with Congress on solutions to help federal land managers and private forest owners implement forest restoration activities more efficiently and at lower cost. We also provided early support for the following bills that have been introduced in Congress.
• S 4057 – A bill that would close a loophole in current regulations that is being used by environmental groups to file unwarranted litigation against Forest Service projects
• S 4431 / HR 7978 – The Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act. This bipartisan legislation that would increase the efficiency and cost effectiveness of public forest management
• S 4451 – The Rural Forest Markets Act. This bipartisan bill would support creating forest carbon markets for family forest landowners. These markets will incentivize keeping forests as forests.

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The state chapter joined other conservation organizations in opposing what, on the surface, appears to be helpful conservation legislation in the state. AB 3030 would have set a goal for the state to “protect” 30 percent of all lands and waters by 2030 to preserve the state’s biodiversity. While this is admirable and could advance conservation goals, the NWTF is concerned that there is no definition of “protect” and could result in the closure of these protected areas to active management, including hunting and fishing. We expect similar legislation in other states, and the NWTF is working to educate lawmakers so future bills include regulated hunting and fishing as allowed uses, acknowledge the need for active management to protect biodiversity, to require State Wildlife Action Plans to guide the efforts and couple the goals with dedicated funding so current conservation efforts are not negatively impacted. Ultimately, the legislation died in committee. • The state chapter supported a proposed $5 increase to the Upland Game Bird and Waterfowl Validation stamps to fund the previously established, but unfunded, Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program. Funding would be used to incentivize landowners to plant wildlife-friendly cover crops on idled farmlands. This bill would significantly enhance habitat for wild turkeys throughout the Sacramento Valley and Sacramento River Focal Landscape.

**Colorado:** The state chapter supported the Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s purchase of a nearly 2,400-acre addition to the Bosque del Oso state wildlife area.

**Illinois:** The state chapter supported changes to the upcoming spring turkey permit lottery and the Department of Natural Resources’ decision to provide refunds to hunters who were unable to use their 2020 spring turkey permits due to state site closures or “stay-at-home” orders.

**Indiana:** The state chapter supported the listing of ruffed grouse as a state endangered species and emphasized the need for active management and young-forest habitat to assist with their recovery. • The state chapter advocated for inclusion of 28-gauge and .410 shotguns, as well additional shot sizes, as legal firearms for wild turkeys. The Natural Resources Commission approved, and the Department is drafting the regulations.

**Iowa:** The state chapter joined other members of the Iowa Conservation Alliance to advocate for the extension and funding of the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. As a result, the program has been extended for two more years, and lawmakers approved full funding of $12 million for REAP for the 2021 fiscal year.

**Maine:** The state chapter, along with 16 other sportsmen’s organizations, sent a letter opposing a petition to ban baiting while bear hunting, a longstanding tradition in Maine. Elimination of baiting would severely impact participation and negatively affect the state’s ability to meet harvest objectives for black bears.

**Michigan:** The state chapter sent a letter to the Department of Natural Resources director and members of the Natural Resources Commission outlining the importance of completing the Spring Turkey Hunting Survey due to increased hunting participation this year. The survey will be conducted.

**Minnesota:** The state chapter advocated for additional funding via a bonding bill for the Department of Natural Resources. Unfortunately, the bonding bill did not pass.

**Missouri:** In conjunction with the Conservation Federation of Missouri, volunteer Dan Zerr and district biologist John Burk helped craft comments on the new Missouri Turkey Management Plan on behalf of the state chapter. • The state chapter issued an action alert to all state members to defeat legislative amendments that would have derailed the efforts of the Feral Hog Elimination Partnership. • Burk provided comments to the Natural Resources Conservation Service state technical committee concerning changes the CRP SAFE Program.

**North Dakota:** The state chapter joined a letter thanking Senators Hoeven and Cramer for their support of the Great American Outdoors Act.

**Oklahoma:** The state chapter supported numerous changes to the Fall and Spring turkey seasons that are designed to address population declines in southeast Oklahoma by reducing harvest.

**Oregon:** NWTF staff provided comments to the U.S. Forest Service supporting their efforts to amend an existing rule that prohibits the harvest of any trees over 21 inches in diameter on national forests in eastern Oregon and Washington. This one-size-fits-all approach limits scientific forest management. We encouraged them to adopt new rules that provide more flexibility.

**West Virginia:** District biologist Cully McCurdy participated in a call with U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito, organized by the Division of Natural Resources, to request Senator Capito to introduce a Senate companion bill to the House version of the bipartisan Recovering America’s Wildlife Act.