



NWTF ON THE HILL

The NWTF spent several days in June and July in Washington D.C. representing NWTF members on a wide variety of issues. Director of Government Affairs Joel Pedersen met with congressional staff to discuss proposed legislation including the Pittman-Robertson Modernization Act, Recovering America's Wildlife Act, and advocating for increased funding for the USDA Forest Service and other resource management agencies. He also discussed implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, and changes to how the Forest Service does environmental review with the respective government agencies and congressional staff. Pedersen also attended a partnership meeting with Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen, USDA Undersecretary James Hubbard, and the National Association of State Foresters to discuss the Forest Service's Shared Stewardship initiative, forest management, and how the NWTF can be a stronger partner for both.

RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT

Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 3742) was introduced in the House in early July and gained 61 bipartisan original cosponsors. As of August 20, the sponsor list stands at 98. The bill proposes directing \$1.3 billion annually from existing Treasury funds to state wildlife agencies to protect at-risk species and habitat through proactive management. The NWTF is working hard to advance this important legislation and has started a social media campaign to educate our members about the legislation and thank cosponsors.

MODERNIZING THE PITTMAN ROBERTSON FUND FOR TOMORROW'S NEEDS ACT

The Pittman-Robertson Modernization Act (H.R. 877, S. 2092) was recently reintroduced in both the House and the Senate. This bill provides greater flexibility for

state agencies to use Pittman-Robertson funds for hunter R3 efforts. The NWTF met with several potential Senate sponsors to encourage introduction of the bill. We continue to work with members in both the House and Senate to have a hearing and vote on the legislation.

HUNTING ON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

The NWTF submitted official comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in support of the proposal to increase public access for hunting on 1.4 million acres of National Wildlife Refuge land. This proposal opens 139,000 acres to turkey hunting for the first time, and an additional 62,000 acres for youth turkey hunting opportunities. In addition the proposal aligns refuge hunting regulations with state regulations to make it easier on hunters.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE NEPA REVIEW

The NWTF submitted official comments to the Forest Service regarding their proposed changes to how the agency implements environmental reviews according to the National Environmental Policy Act. The NWTF supports their proposals to streamline the review process and add additional tools and categorical exclusions which will help expedite forest management. The proposed rule continues to require public notice, but allows more flexibility based on the type of project, instead of requiring a one-size-fits-all approach. They also provide tools that are available to other federal agencies, but presently not to the Forest Service. The rule also adds science based categorical exclusions that will help to increase the pace of forest management. While often characterized in popular media as a circumvention of NEPA, categorical exclusions are actually a level of environmental review that are allowed by NEPA for projects that fit designated criteria that have been regularly demonstrated to have no known negative impacts to the environment.

FIELD NOTES



FEATURED STATE



Missouri: The Missouri State Chapter was very active during the legislative session looking out for the interests of Missouri sportsmen. District Biologist John Burke represented the NWTF at a Missouri Department of Conservation meeting to discuss proposed elk season, Chronic Wasting Disease regulations, and changes to out-of-state hunting license fees. The state chapter submitted a letter of support in favor of closing feral hog hunting on the Mark Twain National Forest; an action that has been shown to help stop the illegal translocation of this destructive species. The state chapter opposed and helped to defeat HJR18, which would have required the Conservation Sales Tax that funds the Department of Conservation to be renewed every six years. Finally, the state chapter supported HB 260, which was signed into law and increases fines for illegally harvesting deer, elk, bear, turkey, and paddlefish. Thanks to the Missouri volunteers who made their voice heard and made a difference in the legislative arena.

STATE UPDATES

Arizona: State chapter partnered with other organizations to support of Recovering America's Wildlife Act. • The state chapter supported game commission recommendations to address predator hunting contests.

California: State chapter participated in advocacy campaigns and social media outreach opposing AB 1254, which prohibits the take of bobcats. The legislation passed the Assembly and is now in the Senate.

Illinois: Legislation supported by the state chapter authorizing a 3-year apprentice hunting license was signed into law.

Indiana: State board submitted letter opposing a petition to convert two state forests to state parks, removing the ability to hunt and actively manage the land. NWTF and partners attended the Natural Resources Committee meeting on the proposal, where it was denied.

Michigan: State chapter hosted a bipartisan legislative turkey hunt, and five turkeys were harvested by legislators.

• Ryan Boyer, district biologist, and Steve Sharp, R3 coordinator, represented the NWTF at a legislative sportsmen's caucus shooting event and wild game dinner

Minnesota: State chapter supported sub-gauge and small shot size legislation which legalized .28 gauge and .410 for wild turkey starting with the fall 2019 hunting season.

North Carolina: Connor Bachman, regional director, and Chris Coxen, district biologist, represented NWTF at the NC Sportsmen's day at the Capitol.

Ohio: State chapter president Jeff Wright represented the NWTF at an event led by Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt announcing the proposal to open 1.4 million acres of National Wildlife Refuge land to hunting.

Pennsylvania: Mitch Blake, NWTF district biologist attended the Pennsylvania Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus Annual Reception.

Texas: An appropriations rider that would have redirected Upland Game Bird Stamp funds from their intended uses was defeated. • State chapter leaders educated Rep. Lyle Larson, new co-chair of the Texas Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, about the NWTF and our mission.

Virginia: Cully McCurdy, NWTF district biologist attended the Virginia Hardwood Initiative meeting hosted by Rob Farrell, Virginia State Forester, to establish a group of stakeholders to form a strategy to increase and enhance hardwood forest management in Virginia.

West Virginia: NWTF District Biologist Cully McCurdy attended a stakeholders meeting hosted by West Virginia Senators Joe Manchin and Shelly Moore Capito regarding the New River Gorge National Scenic River's potential re-designation to National Park. The New River Gorge NSR encompasses 70,000+ acres currently open to hunting. McCurdy urged the Senators to preserve hunting as part of any legislation. The Senators are drafting a bill that will result in a net loss of approximately 4,500 acres to create safe zones.