NWTF ON THE HILL

CEO Becky Humphries, Director of Government Affairs Joel Pedersen and Vice President of Conservation Ross Melinchuk spent time in a Washington, D.C., meeting with officials to discuss issues important to the NWTF. The three met with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to discuss the current state of the 2018 Farm Bill, important federal forest management priorities and our partnership with USDA agencies. The three also met with Todd Willins, assistant deputy secretary of the Department of Interior, to discuss expanding our ongoing partnerships with DOI agencies.

While in D.C., Humphries and Melinchuk met with Leonard Jordan, acting chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to finalize the NWTF’s new forestry agreement and discuss the future of the NWTF’s NRCS liaison position.

Humphries returned to D.C. in mid-October for a roundtable discussion with Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and other conservation leaders to discuss updates on the implementation of secretarial orders, deferred maintenance on Department of Interior lands, and reorganization of the Department. This meeting was the second in a series of roundtable discussions aimed at maintaining open communication between Zinke and conservation organizations.

2018 FARM BILL UPDATE

On Sept. 30, the 2014 Farm Bill expired with no replacement, but the NWTF continues to advocate for strong conservation and forestry titles with farm bill conference committee members and staff as they work toward approving a farm bill by the end of the year. “Each of us is still at the negotiating table, and we remain committed to working together on a farm bill”, the House and Senate Agriculture committee said in a joint statement, “Our conversations are productive, and progress toward an agreement is taking shape. We are going to get this right.”

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT REFORM

The NWTF provided official comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on its proposed Endangered Species Act regulation revisions to improve interagency cooperation, clarify standards for listing, delisting and designating critical habitat, and promote the use of species-specific rules.

In our comments, the NWTF applauded the FWS’ proposal to use different forms of consultation that would streamline discussion so that management can take place in a more timely and efficient way. The NWTF also emphasized the need for regulation changes that set consistent standards when listing and delisting species, so that species can be delisted once their original recovery numbers are met.

UPDATING PITTMAN-ROBERTSON ACT

Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Act Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act of 2017 passed in the House, and the NWTF is working with partners to encourage action on similar legislation in the Senate. This legislation will allow certain Pittman-Robertson Act funds to be used for the recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and recreational shooters, and to create public shooting ranges.

“Hunting and recreational shooting provide vital funding to state fish and wildlife agencies to deliver on-the-ground conservation and sustainable management of wildlife and their habitat,” NWTF CEO Becky Humphries said. “The increased ability to attract and retain new hunters and recreational shooters provided by this legislation ensures funding for conservation into the future.”

GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT

The NWTF is incorporating a new advocacy platform to keep members and staff updated on conservation and wildlife policies and regulations, and to make it easier to engage with elected officials. Be on the lookout for action alerts and policy updates through our new software, Votility.
COLORADO: On Aug. 14, leaders from the USDA Forest Service Washington Office and the Executive Office of Management and Budget visited Uncompahgre National Forest to tour project sites created through the Uncompahgre Plateau Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. The NWTF is a partner in this program that has provided funding for important habitat treatments through the Colorado state Hunting Heritage Super Fund. This program has resulted in 20,938 acres of mechanical treatment and 10,589 acres of prescribed fire. Made possible through public support and collaborative efforts between state and federal agencies, private industry, conservation groups and local universities, this work has been completed with no challenges or litigation. District Biologist Jamie Nogle presented to the attendees on the importance of active forest management across the Uncompahgre National Forest and how NWTF is working with the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest staff to develop a stewardship agreement to increase active forest management.

STATE UPDATES

California
- The state chapter supported legislation to create affordable youth big game tags and an upland habitat maintenance incentive plan for landowners. Both pieces of legislation were signed into law.
- The state chapter opposed legislation that would prohibit firearms as raffle prizes. The legislation was dropped.
- The state chapter is involved in discussion with the California Fish and Wildlife Commission on a potential regulation change that would allow legal shooting hours for spring turkey to extend until sunset.

Colorado
District Biologist Jamie Nogle represented the NWTF at the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Statewide Sportsmen’s Roundtable.

Mississippi
State board members met with the Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Commission to discuss a mandatory harvest reporting system for turkeys and a regulation prohibiting “baiting/feeding” during turkey season.

Missouri
State Chapter Vice President Dan Zerr and District Biologist John Burk were asked to serve on the Big Game, Turkey, and Furbearer Committee of the Conservation Federation of Missouri. Burk presented position statements to the committee on feral hog control and out-of-state license fee structures supporting the authority of the state agencies.

New Hampshire
New England Regional Director Carter Heath attended an invite-only meeting with Gov. Chris Sununu and other sportsmen’s groups to discuss the potential for a Right-to-Hunt state constitutional amendment, recent legislation to examine New Hampshire Fish and Game Department funding and the need for more conservation-based curriculum materials in schools.

Ohio
- District Forester Lee Crocker attended the Sportsmen’s Alliance Rally, which allows sportsmen the opportunity to hear from governor candidates and meet policy makers.
- The state chapter is providing financial support for and participating in the “Protect What’s Right” Campaign, that cultivates positive relationships between sportsmen and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Wildlife, governor candidates and the legislature.

Oklahoma
State chapter representatives attended Gov. Mary Fallin’s bill signing to declare Saturday, Sept. 22, 2018 as National Hunting and Fishing Day in the state.

Pennsylvania
- The state chapter opposed legislation that would transfer authority from the Pennsylvania Game Commission to legislatively appointed individuals of special interest groups.
- The state chapter supported legislation that would grant the Pennsylvania Game Commission authority to regulate Sunday hunting opportunities in the state.

Texas
- Dr. Robert Linder represented the state chapter at a Texas Chenier Plain Sportsmen’s Summit to address coastal wetland/marsh conservation issues.
- State Chapter President Craig White and district biologists Annie Farrell and Gene Miller served as resource advisors in a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Upland Game Bird Advisory Committee Meeting.

Utah
District Biologist Jamie Nogle presented on the importance of proper forest management and NWTF’s policy efforts to complete forest management at the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation Policy Forum.