



The Voice of Outdoor Kansas

**March-
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P.O. Box 771282
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News & Events

Pages 1-7, 17

Anglers & Habitats

Pages 16-17, 21

Hunters & Habitats

Pages 8-10, 15, 20, 28

Natural Resource Management

Pages 1, 3-4, 11, 13-15, 18-19,
21-22, 24-28

Outdoor Recreation

Pages 6-7, 17-18

Kid's Wildlife Friends

Pages 13, 20, 22-23, 26

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www.kswildlife.org,
for additional KWF information

NWF, Kansas Wildlife Federation, and Affiliates submit statement on 2018 Farm Bill for Senate Committee on Agriculture

The National Wildlife Federation, along with the Kansas Wildlife Federation and other NWF affiliates, submitted a statement for the record for the Senate Committee on Agriculture's Field Hearing on the upcoming Farm Bill.

"Investment in strong conservation programs within the Farm Bill benefit an array of habitats, wildlife populations, landowners, and rural Kansas communities," said Angela Anderson, president of Kansas Wildlife Federation. "The loss of Conservation Reserve Program acreage in Kansas has had a significant impact on native grassland wildlife species. We need to expand the "sodsaver" provision of the Farm Bill beyond the current six Prairie Pothole region states to save valuable native grassland habitat."

"We at the National Wildlife Federation are excited to get to work with Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and the members of the committee on the 2018 Farm Bill," said Collin O'Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. "The Farm Bill's voluntary conservation programs have a tremendous ability to conserve and restore vital wildlife habitats in cost-effective ways, while enjoying broad support with producers and engaging rural communities."

"The next Farm Bill needs to increase the funding and capacity of popular programs like the Conservation Reserve Program and expand the "sodsaver" provision nationwide to help reduce the conversion of native grassland and wildlife habitat. The National Wildlife Federation is eager to work with Congress to find ways to increase funding for these programs so that producers can continue to improve soil health, restore water quality, and increase wildlife populations, all while strengthening rural economies."

Visit the National Wildlife Federation Media Center at NWF.org/News.

**Protecting the Land...
Passing on Our Traditions**



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President's Message

Kansans had a unique opportunity the last week of February. The top two U.S. Senate Ag Committee members held a Farm Bill Hearing in Manhattan, giving two panels of businesses, organizations and entities an opportunity to voice their opinion of what the 2018 Farm Bill needs to include. The hearing process is an important first step to ensuring that any future Farm Bill meets the needs of the whole landscape.

Though the discussion was good and many valid points and opinions were made, such as ensuring the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) dollars continued or is raised to past amounts, it was disappointing that there was not an official representative from the conservation groups present on the panel. Conservation of natural resources and agriculture go hand in hand. Without healthy soil and plentiful, clean water, producers have a more difficult time making their living off the land. The conservation of wildlife habitat and agriculture also go hand in hand. Humans and wildlife are intricately connected in the web of life. That is why the Kansas Wildlife Federation partnered with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma, Iowa Wildlife Federation, and the Nebraska Wildlife Federation to submit a written statement of record for the hearing.

To highlight a couple of the top priorities the group of wildlife federations and coalition thought the 2018 Farm Bill needed to include:

- Increase base line funding for Farm Bill conservation programs

Farm bill conservation programs have shown tremendous value in improving soil health and protecting water quantity and quality, improved water management and flood prevention. They are extremely important for wildlife and wildlife habitat, including many game species. The Farm Bill programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and EQIP regularly are unable to meet the demand from producers. Other programs such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are critically important programs with important wildlife components. As well, we encourage an increase in acreage in the CRP as it has been one of the most successful programs for conservation of soil, water and wildlife habitat on private lands over the last 30 years.



The 2014 Farm Bill cut mandatory conservation spending by around \$4 billion over 10 years. Additionally, Farm Bill conservation programs are repeatedly targeted for funding cuts during the annual appropriations process.

- Prevent conversion of native habitats through a nationwide sodsaver provision

As a Kansan who enjoys and cherishes living in the last 1% remaining of the original tallgrass prairie ecosystem, thus making it the most rare and endangered ecosystem, this one tugs on my heartstrings as many of the wildlife that depend on the grasslands are declining in population. As cited in our written testimony, researchers from the University of Wisconsin noted from satellite data from USDA, USGS and others that there was a 3 million acre loss of non-cropland from 2008-2012, most of that being native prairie. Of that newly converted cropland, a majority of it was poor quality soils for cultivation.

The 2014 Farm Bill included a sodsaver provision that reduces the amount of subsidies for farmers who choose to convert native grasslands to cropland. However, this only applies to 6 states in the Prairie Pothole region. We believe it is critically important to our endangered tallgrass prairie ecosystem and other grassland areas for this to apply nationwide. Some of the highest rates of conversion and agricultural expansion include Kansas, Oklahoma and the panhandle of Texas. As stated in our testimony, many of the remaining grassland areas outside of the Prairie Pothole Region are in drought-prone areas that make trying to produce crops a risky venture. The risk of farming these unproductive lands should not fall on taxpayers.

Continued on Page 7

Affiliate News



Geary County Fish and Game Association — For the past 15 years, the Geary County fish and Game Assoc. has held a KTA shoot on News Year's Day. This year 18 shooters enjoyed a mild day for the event. Plans are to continue this event on New Year's Day 2018.

NWF and CWF: Zinke is the right pick

**By Collin O'Mara and
Suzanne O'Neill**

A measure of a leader is the ability to bring people together to get big things done. This is particularly true for the Secretary of Interior, who needs a collaborative leadership style to address vexing challenges, from improving management of public lands and recovering thousands of at-risk wildlife species to confronting water shortages and reclaiming degraded lands.

Making progress requires engaging multiple levels of government, tribes, landowners, conservationists, and other stakeholders to find solutions that are grounded in sound science and uphold America's core conservation values.

As an organization that represents millions of hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts, the National Wildlife Federation and its state affiliate, the Colorado Wildlife Federation, believe that Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.) has the conservation ethic and

leadership ability to be a strong Interior Secretary. We urge the Senate to quickly confirm him and we look forward to working with him to tackle unprecedented challenges.

At the root of these challenges lie decades of underinvestment in our natural resources and eroded relationships over the management of our public lands. Americans overwhelmingly support the need to keep public lands in public hands, but they want them managed better.

Hunters and anglers view America's public lands as a birthright and a sacred part of our democratic heritage held in trust for future generations. In Colorado and across our nation, public lands serve as the foundation of America's \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy and support more than 6 million jobs.

In Colorado alone, outdoor recreation

Continued on Page 8

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Officers and Board of Directors

The Kansas Wildlife Federation promotes hunting and fishing opportunities and associated recreation for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists.

KWF supports the sustainable use and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats through education, partnerships, outreach and policy oversight.

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Junction City, KS

Ford County Sportman's Club
Dodge City, KS

Kansas Wildlife Officers Association
Fredonia, KS

Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation
Buffalo, MO

Riley County Fish and Game Association

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Ryan Zinke sworn in as 52nd Secretary of the Interior

5th-generation Montanan pledges to uphold President Theodore Roosevelt's legacy

Ryan Zinke (pronounced Zink-EE) was confirmed and sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1. The Senate voted 68-31 to confirm Zinke the morning of March 1, 2017, and he was sworn in by Vice President Mike Pence at a ceremony in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building later that evening. Zinke is the first Montanan to serve as a cabinet secretary and also the first U.S. Navy SEAL in the cabinet.

"I am honored and humbled to serve Montana and America as Secretary of the Interior," Zinke said. "I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that our treasured public lands are 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people' and will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits all Americans for generations to come. This means responsible natural resource development, increased access for recreation and sportsmen, and conservation that makes the land more valuable for our children's children. Importantly, our sovereign Indian Nations and territories must have the respect and freedom they deserve."

In nominating Congressman Zinke, President Donald Trump said, "Ryan has built one of the strongest track records on championing regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development and public land issues in Congress. As a former Navy SEAL, he has incredible leadership skills and an attitude of doing whatever it takes to win. America is the most beautiful country in the world and he is going to help keep it that way with smart management of our federal lands. At the same time, my administration's goal is to repeal bad regulations and use our natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people, and Ryan will explore every possibility for how we can safely and responsibly do that."

"Our public lands can once again be economic engines for our nation by creating jobs in energy, recreation, and conservation," continued Zinke. "By working with President Trump and Congress to reevaluate and fix flawed regulations that are barriers to job creation, we will unleash the economic opportunity within our borders. Creating jobs on

public lands can and will be done in an environmentally responsible way during my tenure."

About Ryan Zinke

As a fifth-generation Montanan who grew up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Zinke has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while upholding Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He has consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and has also been a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen and women to gain access to our public lands. Zinke also co-authored the 2015 Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for revitalizing America's timber areas and preventing wildfires by emphasizing local collaboration on responsible timber harvest projects.

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who serve as steward for 20 percent of the nation's lands, including national parks, monuments and wildlife refuges, as well as other public lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters; is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states; and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

Ryan Zinke represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014, building an impressive portfolio on Interior issues ranging from federal mineral leases to tribal affairs to public lands conservation. Zinke is widely praised for his voting record that supports the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic, recreation and conservation aspects.

Before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, Zinke served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of Zinke's public service was his 23 years as a U.S. Navy

Continued on Page 8

Business Meeting:

Friday, April 7th

1pm—Open to the public

**KANSAS WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

The voice of outdoor Kansas



LET'S GET OUTSIDE TOGETHER!
At the KWF Annual Meeting



**Date: Saturday,
April 8th**

**Time: All day starting
at 10am**

Happy Hour & Auction:
5pm

Keynote Speaker
6:30pm:
Noppadol Paothong,
Missouri Dept. of Con-
servation photographer
as seen in "Save the
Last Dance"

CAP Awards Banquet:
7pm

We're all about getting outside! This KWF Annual meeting will provide you the opportunity to do just that!

Breakout sessions include:

Fishing Clinic by Fishings Future, Fishing or Lake Tour with Jan Kissinger, Service work at the Milford Nature Center, Archery; Lecture Series available: "Water: Why Is It So Difficult to Conserve" ; "Bees, Beekeeping and Pollinators"; "From Fort Laramie to Standing Rock: The Dakota Access Pipeline Controversy"

**Cost for day & evening:
Adults—\$50; Youth 12 &
under—\$15, 2 meals pro-
vided**

**Location:
Acorns Resort
3710 Farnum Creek Road
Milford Lake**

Register by April 1st
for a day of outdoor
fun!

Registration Fees sent
to: KWF, PO Box
771282, Wichita, KS
67277

To reserve a cabin at
the resort:

**Contact:
785-463-4000**

2017 Outdoor Adventure Camp: A Summer Treat for Youngsters

Outdoor Adventure Camp (OAC) is a six-day summer camp for kids who either enjoy the outdoors or want to learn more about it. This conservation education program is co-sponsored by the Kansas Wildlife Federation and KSU Cooperative Extension Service. This will be the 30th anniversary for this popular camp and educational opportunity.

If you are a Kansas youngster who enjoys the outdoors, now is the time to make plans to attend Outdoor Adventure Camp from Sunday, June 4 through Friday, June 9 at the Camp WaShunGa area of Rock Springs Ranch, just south of Junction City. The camp is open to boys and girls ages 10 to 12 this summer.

Mornings will be spent traipsing the grounds at Camp WaShunGa with instructors, getting a hands-on feel for how

various critters and plants live together in the ecosystem we call Kansas. Afternoons are spent learning about several areas of the outdoors, including mammals, insects, birds, fish and amphibians and reptiles. Ecology, wetlands, riparian areas and watersheds are some terms you will learn about at this unique camp.

Since the prairie does not go to sleep at sundown, neither will you. Depending on the evening, you may be out and about prowling for owls, stargazing, spotlighting spiders or watching bats gobble bugs.

Other activities include scavenger hunts, water sports including swimming and canoeing, fishing, shooting sports including rifle, shotgun, archery, and pellet gun. You'll pick your choices, or participate in all if you like.

The price of the camp includes all food,

instruction and lodging. A swimsuit, sleeping gear and clothes you'll wear for a week are about all you need to bring. Sunscreen, insect repellent, a cap and water bottle also will come in handy. The price for the entire week is \$325, which includes arts and crafts. You may want to bring a little money for snacks and souvenirs at Milford Hatchery and Nature Center. Space is limited and registration deadline is June 3.

Send your application and full fee to Outdoor Adventure Camp, c/o Theresa Berger, 406 S. New York Ave., Sylvan Grove, KS 67481. Checks should be made payable to the Kansas Wildlife Federation. If you need more information or an application, phone 785-526-7466. Evenings are best, or leave a message on the machine. You can also go to the KWF website www.kswildlife.org.

Name _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

County _____ Phone _____

Parents' Names & Day/night Phone Numbers:

Father _____

Mother _____

Group Picture Order \$10.00 Each _____

Please include payment with camp fee.

T-shirt: (Adult Sizes)

Size: ___SM___ Med. ___LG___ XL___ XL___

(T-shirts included in Craft Fee)

Full \$325 fee with application due June 3.

Refund only upon written notice of cancellation prior to June 1.

No reductions or refunds for late arrivals or early departures.

Make check payable to the Kansas Wildlife Federation (KWF)

Call 785-526-7466 for details or send application with payment:

Outdoor Adventure Camp

C/o Theresa Berger

406 S. New York Ave.

Sylvan Grove, KS 67481

E-mail: bergkwf@wtciweb.com

Can you help?

Outdoor Adventure Camp is an ongoing project of KWF, run strictly by volunteers who feel strongly that youngsters need to have an opportunity to learn more about the great outdoors! Volunteer counselors are needed to spend a week or even just a few days supervising youngsters. We prefer a counselor for every 8 to 10 youngsters. That means for 50 kids, usually about 40 boys and 10 girls, we need 4 to 5 male counselors and 1 to 2 females.

In the past, we've had parents attend with their youngsters, grandparents, college students wanting to get into the counseling or camp administration field, teachers and people interested in helping children. We prefer college students who have an interest in working with kids- an internship may be

worked out with instructors. We also have a few openings for junior counselors as well. You must be at least 18 years of age.

Who wouldn't like to spend a week with 50, 10 to 12 year-olds—trying to get them to sleep, keeping them in line all day and nursing cuts, bruises, poison ivy—helping kids have a great summer outdoor experience?! You'll be ready to go home and relax when it's over. Moreover, it won't cost you a dime, except for the gas to get to camp. Seriously, it is a rewarding experience. Please consider helping out. Call me to get your name on the list.

This camp is funded primarily through fees collected from those attending. Outdoor Writers of Kansas provides scholarships for participants from the Big

Brothers/Big Sisters program each year. Sportsman's groups throughout Kansas often fund local youngsters to provide scholarships to help with the cost. KWF volunteers donate a tremendous amount of time and money. We welcome any donations or funding ideas to improve the program.

Anyone who wants to present a program at camp should call Theresa Berger, Camp Coordinator. We're always looking for new ideas. Outdoor Adventure Camp is for youngsters, and they come first! It takes a lot of work by a number of volunteers to make it a positive learning experience. Can you help? Call Theresa Berger at 785-526-7466 or e-mail her at bergkwf@wtciweb.com.

You and Dillons can help the Kansas Wildlife Federation

Again this year Dillons and other Kroger affiliates have created a way for you to choose which non-profit/charitable organization you'd like to support EVERY TIME you shop at Dillons. Kansas Wildlife Federation will get credit for every purchase* its members make using their registered Plus card. The more they shop with Dillons, the more opportunity KWF has to earn even bigger rewards. It's that easy!

A customer must have 3 things to register and begin supporting KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION:

1. A Plus card, which is available at any store by asking an associate
2. A valid email address, which can be obtained from any free online service and can be anonymous
3. A personalized account at our website, which again can be anonymous

Here's how it works!

TO ENROLL IN THE COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM:

1. Members must visit Dillons' website at www.dillons.com/communityrewards (substitute Dillons, Bakers or



Gerbes for banner depending on your location)

2. Sign in OR Create an account (see below on creating an online account at our website)

3. Click on "Enroll Now"
4. Enter the 5-digit NPO (Kansas Wildlife Federation is 62633) and search
5. Select your Organization and click on "Enroll"

TO CREATE AN ONLINE ACCOUNT AT THE DILLONS WEBSITE:

1. Visit the website at www.dillons.com/communityrewards
2. Click on "Register" at the top of the page
3. Enter your email address, password, zip code (select preferred store) and check the box if you desire to receive

email communication from us

4. Click on "Creat Account" at the bottom of the page
5. You will receive an email confirmation to your inbox, to activate your account click on the link in the body of the email and enter your sign in information to confirm

We are very grateful to Dillons for this opportunity for our members and supporters to guide their potential giving dollars to the Federation and other worthy causes. And we are grateful to you for supporting the Kansas Wildlife Federation in many different ways!

*Specific purchases that cannot be included are: alcohol, tobacco, fuel, Pharmacy purchases with gov't assistance (i.e. Medicare, Medicaid, Tricare), postage, bottle deposits, lottery, Western Union, other customer services, promotional tickets, sales tax, banner gift cards, reloadable gift card products (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Green Dot). Please see FAQs at our website for a complete list of exclusions.

PRESIDENT

Continued from Page 2

The group also feels the 2018 Farm Bill needs to maintain the linkage between conservation compliance provisions and crop insurance premium subsidies.

The Senate Agriculture Committee has a busy year ahead of them to ensure needs are met, well-crafted and that the new Farm Bill is set forth in a timely manner. We only hope the bill includes strong conservation provisions that will protect our only soil, water, and wildlife habitat. When we work together for the same goal – ensuring our natural

resources for our food supply and habitat for our wildlife and our domestic life – that is when we all succeed.

(To view the hearing from Manhattan, KS, visit: <http://www.agriculture.senate.gov/hearings/hearing-from-the-heartland-perspectives-on-the-2018-farm-bill-from-kansas>)

Apply now for spring turkey special hunts

It's still early to think about scouting turkeys for the spring season because the big birds are still in their winter flocks. However, it's not too early to be thinking about finding a place to hunt. One way to find a great hunting spot is through the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism's (KDWPT) Special Hunts Program.

There are 84 spring turkey hunts offered this year with a total of 165 Special Hunt permits available. Twenty-five are Mentor Hunts, 29 are Open Hunts and 30 are Youth Hunts. Hunters must apply online by March 6, 2017 to be drawn for a hunt. There's no fee to apply, and the draw is open to residents and nonresidents. Apply at <http://ksoutdoors.com/Hunting/Special-Hunts-Information>.

Special hunts are part of KDWPT's recruitment and retention program, Pass It On.

These hunts are conducted on department lands, including state parks, wildlife areas, and refuges. The hunts also occur on Walk-in Hunting Areas; national wildlife refuges; city and county properties; and other locations where access may be limited. The hunts limit the number of participants to ensure high-quality experiences.

Open Hunts are open to all persons with no age or experience restrictions. Youth Hunts are open to youth 16 and younger, who must be accompanied by adult mentors 18 or older (adults may not hunt). Mentor Hunts are open to youth and/or inexperienced (novice) hunters who are each supervised by a licensed adult mentor. Both the novice and mentor may hunt. Several hunts allow for additional hunters to accompany a permit holder.

Successful applicants will be notified by

email shortly after the computer-generated drawing has occurred. Special Hunt permits only provide access, so hunters must purchase all necessary licenses, permits and have hunter education certification, unless exempt.

The 2017 Spring Turkey Season opens April 1-11, 2017 for youth and hunters with disabilities; April 3-11, 2017 for archery only; and April 12-May 31, 2017 for the regular season. Permits and game tags are available over the counter for all turkey management units except Unit 4. Hunters who have purchased a spring turkey permit may also purchase a second turkey game tag valid in units 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6. For information on permits, regulations and other spring turkey hunting opportunities, visit ksoutdoors.com and click "Hunting," then "Turkey Information."

ZINKE

Continued from Page 3

generates more than \$13 billion in annual spending and employs well over 120,000 people. Nonetheless, the political fight over sell-off continues to rage in Congress and state capitols, fueled by ideologues and special interests intent on privatizing public resources and eliminating public access.

Rep. Zinke has demonstrated leadership by opposing the takeover of our public lands — lands President Theodore Roosevelt once called our "most glorious heritage." As an avid sportsman from Montana, he understands that most American hunters and anglers depend upon public lands because the vast majority cannot afford private hunt clubs.

In Congress, Rep. Zinke led the charge to keep public lands public and to reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund. He quit the Republican Platform Committee over its inclusion of a plank supporting selling our public lands. During his confirmation hearing, he adamantly supported public lands and committed to rely on sound

science to manage natural resources. He has advocated for investing in our National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and Bureau of Land Management lands, and has consistently supported State Wildlife Grants and other collaborative, proactive efforts to recover wildlife populations before species require more expensive and draconian measures.

Of course, we anticipate there will be instances where we disagree. Rep. Zinke will face incredible pressure to expand energy development and it will be important that he stand up to conserve important wildlife habitat and support hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation interests. Preserving measures that improve BLM planning, reduce methane pollution, and recover sage grouse would be a good start.

He'll have to defend the Antiquities Act, which since first used by Theodore Roosevelt has protected world-class hunting, fishing, and cultural sites, like Browns Canyon and the Colorado National Monument. Efforts to reform coal leasing must include a fair return for taxpayers and sufficient resources to reclaim degraded lands.

He'll also face a growing list of en-

dangered species, unless we can secure significant dedicated investment for proactive recovery efforts. We are committed to working with the new Secretary to engage local communities to find solutions that are supported by sound science, reflect America's conservation values and benefit local economies.

The Secretary of Interior is responsible for what President Roosevelt called "the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us." We believe Ryan Zinke is up for the challenge and encourage the Senate to confirm him swiftly so he can start bringing people together to fulfill this sacred duty.

Collin O'Mara is president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, America's largest conservation organization with more than six million members and fifty state and territorial affiliates, committed to uniting all Americans to ensure wildlife thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Suzanne O'Neill is executive director of the Colorado Wildlife Federation.

SECRETARY

Continued from Page 4

SEAL officer.

Zinke enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008. He retired

with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations around the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and two tours at SEAL Team Six. Zinke was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was

an All-PAC 10 football player; a Master's degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master's degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. Zinke is proud to be an adopted member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribe at the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana.

Gear and tactics for spring snows

Everything you need to bag more light geese this season

By Chris Jennings
Ducks Unlimited

For many waterfowlers, hunting spring snow geese represents a great opportunity to extend the season. But for true light goose fanatics, this special season isn't a sideshow—it's the main event. The regular waterfowl season was only a warm-up. When the curtain opens on enormous flocks of snows and blues working a decoy spread, the spectacle can be unlike any other in waterfowling.

But make no mistake—these wary birds don't come easy. You have to pay your dues if you want to be successful hunting spring snow geese. The sport is gear-intensive and hunting strategies can be highly specialized.

Following are 10 expert tips and products to help you make the most of spring light goose hunting opportunities in your area.

1. BUILD A REALISTIC SPREAD

Tony Vandemore, co-owner of Habitat Flats in Sumner, Missouri, has been hunting spring snow geese since the inception of the Light Goose Conservation Order in 1999. The veteran guide says that over the years spring snows have become a lot more decoy-shy. This has led him and other hunters to respond by deploying bigger and more realistic decoy spreads.

"In the beginning, our spreads were small and simple, consisting of 150 to 250 Texas rags," Vandemore says. "Today we set out between 700 and 800 full-body decoys on motion stakes. This combination of full-bodies and motion gives us the kind of realism we need to finish wary birds."

Vandemore arranges the decoys in an elongated teardrop pattern—60 to 80 yards wide and up to 250 yards long. "We really spread the decoys out downwind, stringing them in small family groups about 10 yards apart," he says. "This allows decoying geese to follow the feeding line all the way to the layout blinds, which are upwind of the main body of decoys. Snow geese are aggressive feeders, and they want to get to the front of that line. This setup plays to that behavior, and the full-body decoys really get the birds to commit."

2. COVER UP YOUR BLINDS

Blending your layout blinds into the surrounding landscape is especially important when hunting snow geese. Anything that looks out of the ordinary can spook these cagey birds. Tyson Keller, a veteran spring snow goose hunter from Pierre, South Dakota, knows this all too well. He and his hunting partners are almost obsessively compulsive about matching their blinds to

the field and vice versa.

"The first thing we do is rake the entire area where we plan to put our layouts," Keller explains. "After placing all the blinds side by side, we work to create an undisturbed 30-foot perimeter around the blinds. We collect stubble from a couple of hundred yards away and fill in the areas around the blinds. Then we brush up the blinds themselves with leftover stubble. Nothing is left uncovered."

After all the work is completed, the blinds blend naturally into the landscape. "If you pay attention to the details, the blinds will look like nothing more than a slight rise in the field," Keller says.

3. PICK OUT ONE BIRD

Waterfowlers who are unaccustomed to light goose hunting may be overwhelmed the first time they throw open the blind doors and come face-to-face with hundreds—if not thousands—of decoying birds. To avoid flock shooting, Keller recommends selecting an individual goose and focusing on that bird even before the shot is called.

"It's easy to shoot at the flock, but that's ineffective," Keller explains. "Instead, you should search for a cluster of geese, pick out an individual bird, and prepare for that first shot. Focus on that bird, watching the way the flock is shifting, and make your first shot count. Then work your way through the flock, capitalizing on the direction the birds are flaring."

4. GO LIGHT FOR GREATER MOBILITY

While mega-spreads of full-body decoys can be highly effective, they are not always practical for snow goose hunters on the go. For Jerrod Brown, staying mobile is paramount. The owner of Snow Reapers Outfitters in Paragould, Arkansas, guides morning hunts and reserves the afternoon for scouting and preparing for the next day's outing.

"The way we hunt, we need to be able to set up quickly in the morning and pick up by noon," Brown says. "We find fields where snow geese will be feeding and set out about 2,500 SilloSocks and 40 to 50 SilloSock Flapping Flyers. The SilloSocks give us the flexibility to go where the birds want to be, and they also simulate movement. When you watch geese in a field, they are constantly moving and flying around. They get up, and go down. That's the impression we try to make."

By staying mobile, Brown ensures that the birds don't get used to seeing the same spread in the same place. He also keeps his spread fresh by varying the way he sets his

decoys. "Our spread shape and design are never the same, and I make a point of that," he explains. "When we are setting decoys, I tell people to take two steps and put another decoy in the ground, take two more and place another. This keeps the spread random and much more natural."

5. CRANK UP THE E-CALLERS

During the light goose season, waterfowlers in most areas take full advantage of electronic callers to reproduce the raucous sounds made by big concentrations of snow geese. Brown goes all out to create a big sound. His custom-made e-calling system is elaborate even by spring snow goose hunting standards. It features five 1,200-watt amplifiers and 14 speakers, as well as multiple MP3 players.

His calling strategy is aggressive. He turns up the volume and leaves the callers on throughout the morning. "I use a custom recording of mixed feeding flocks and vocalizations, but I never adjust the sound as birds approach," Brown says. "In my opinion, you want to look big and sound big. I turn the volume up and keep it that way. If someone is blowing a horn at you, it's going to get louder as you get closer. That's why I don't adjust the volume as flocks get nearer."

6. COVER UP WITH SHELL DECOYS

No matter how carefully you brush your layouts, some of the natural stubble you worked hard to cover them in will fall off during the course of a hunt. Keller noticed this issue and created a quick fix in the field that has turned into a permanent ploy.

"Hunters moving around and getting in and out of the blind have a tendency to dislodge some of the stubble, especially from the lower half of a layout blind," Keller says. "To help keep the stubble on, I use a bungee cord to attach a shell decoy to the blind's boot bag. I attach another to the top of the blind. The shells at the top and bottom of the blind have an almost three-dimensional effect, casting shadows that make the blinds disappear in the field."

7. ADJUST YOUR CALLING

"Calling geese with an e-caller is complicated," Vandemore says. "It's very similar to calling ducks, because you have to make the right call at the right time. You watch how the birds react and learn from each flock."

On an average day, Vandemore uses a complex, two-call system that features an eight-speaker caller on the upwind section

Continued on Page 14

Light Goose Conservation Order open now

Waterfowl hunting addicts may be having withdrawals since the duck seasons closed on Jan. 29 and regular goose seasons closed Feb. 12. But they will find temporary relief in the Light Goose Conservation Order, which is open Feb. 13-April 30, 2017. In an effort to reduce the population of snow and Ross' geese, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) authorized this special hunting season for light geese.

To increase hunter success, the conservation order authorizes hunting methods not allowed during the regular seasons, including the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns. Extended shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. And there is no daily bag or possession limits.

The conservation order was first established in 1999 when it was determined



that the population of light geese had increased more than 300 percent since the mid-1970s. Extraordinary numbers of geese have denuded portions of their fragile tundra breeding habitat in the arctic, which may take decades to recover. And the damage is impacting other bird

species that nest there, including semi-palmated sandpipers and red-necked phalaropes.

For more information on this season, visit www.ksoutdoors.com and click on "Hunting/When to Hunt/Migratory Birds."

5 shooting tips for spring snows

Follow this expert advice to bag more light geese this season

By John Pollmann
Ducks Unlimited

The Light Goose Conservation Order provides hunters with the opportunity to decoy hundreds, if not thousands, of snow geese into close range. The sights and sounds of so many geese in close proximity, however, can overwhelm even the most experienced shooters. The following five tips offer useful advice on how to stay calm in the storm and shoot straight on spring snows.

Practice, Practice, Practice

The sensory overload created by swarms of birds decoying at close range is often compounded by the unfamiliar shooting position that hunters find themselves in during the spring snow goose season. "If you're going to invest the time and effort into a spring snow goose hunt, practice shooting from a sitting position or from a layout blind," says avid snow goose hunter John Gordon. "If you can, practice those straight-up shots that seem to be so common during spring snow goose season. And be sure to establish enough lead. Snow geese are bigger than ducks, and I think it is easy to focus on the size and not realize just how fast these birds are moving."

Pick Your Shots

Adding a magazine extension to a shotgun is common practice for spring snow goose hunters, but veteran guide Ben Fujan

cautions against trying to empty a gun with every flock. "You're probably going to be more effective with five well-placed shots than trying to squeeze off 10," Fujan says. "Just because you have those shells available doesn't mean that you have to use them. Focus your shots. Pick out a bird and stay on it until it falls."

Put Young Hunters Close to the Action

The excitement of a spring snow goose hunt is appealing to shooters of all ages. You can make the hunt even more rewarding for young and inexperienced hunters, however, if you position their blinds toward the middle of the action. "By keeping the younger hunters in the middle of the spread, I give them the best chance to shoot the birds that decoy in nice and close," says South Dakota guide Charles Hamre. "The shooters on either side are given the instruction to leave the close birds for the young guns in the middle and focus their shots on the back half of the flock."

Stay in the Zone

Before every spring snow goose hunt, New York guide Mike Bard has an important talk with the hunters about the importance of staying in their shooting lanes. "Everyone has a shooting zone that extends out from their blind at roughly 45-degree angles. My instruction is simple: do not shoot anything outside of the zone," Bard says. "This has helped tremendously in maximizing our shooting opportunities,

because hunters do not double-up on as many birds."

Bard also advises hunters to start high rather than low when it comes to picking out a target. "As snow geese are flaring out of a decoy spread, they are basically going to go straight up," says Bard. "Starting at the top and working your way down makes searching out that next target just a little bit easier."

Call the Shot

Having someone designated to call the shot on every flock is a must when you're snow goose hunting. The person calling the shots should be an experienced snow goose hunter. Even more important, he or she should really know how to read the birds.

"You have to watch the wings of the geese to see when they hit what we call the wall," says Trevor Mantuefel, a veteran guide who follows the migration from Arkansas to Alberta each spring. "Steady, slow, or no wing movement is good, because it signals that the birds are going to continue to close the gap. But when those wings start to pump, they've hit the wall and are going to head out." Calling the shot at that moment can save hunters 10 to 15 yards on their initial shots. And that can make a big difference, especially on days with a big wind, when the geese can put some distance between themselves and hunters pretty quickly.

Statement for the Record

For the Senate Committee on Agriculture Field Hearing entitled "Hearing from the Heartland: Perspectives on the 2018 Farm Bill from Kansas"

Submitted by:
**National Wildlife Federation, Kansas Wildlife Federation, Oklahoma Conservation Coalition,
Iowa Wildlife Federation, and Nebraska Wildlife Federation**

February 23, 2017

The National Wildlife Federation, along with Kansas Wildlife Federation, Iowa Wildlife Federation, Nebraska Wildlife Federation, and the Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma, on behalf of our over six million members and supporters, respectfully submit this statement for the hearing record regarding the importance of strong conservation provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill.

We would like to thank Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and the Senate Agriculture Committee for holding this hearing on the 2018 Farm Bill and accepting our statement for the record. This hearing is an important first step toward insuring a well-crafted and timely Farm Bill that meets the needs of the landscape.

The following represent some of our top priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill:

1. Increase baseline funding for Farm Bill conservation programs.

Farm bill conservation programs have shown tremendous value in improving soil health and protecting water quality and quantity. They are also particularly important for wildlife and wildlife habitat. Yet these effective and popular voluntary programs are consistently over-subscribed, with programs like the Conservation Reserve Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program regularly unable to meet the demand from producers. Farm Bill conservation programs also provide benefits to taxpayers through cleaner water, improved water management and flood prevention, and the creation of vital habitat for wildlife, including many game species. Over the past seven years, USDA has enrolled a record number of acres of private working lands in conservation programs, and has worked with as many as 500,000 farmers and ranchers each year to implement conservation practices on their lands.¹

The 2014 Farm Bill cut mandatory conservation spending by around \$4 billion over 10 years - or \$6 billion when sequestration is taken into account.² Additionally, Farm Bill conservation programs have been repeatedly targeted for funding cuts during the annual appropriations process. Given these major cuts that conservation programs have been subjected to and the



continued resource needs facing our nation, we recommend an increase in funding for Farm Bill conservation programs. At the very least, we strongly urge the committee to oppose any cuts to the conservation title.

2. Prevent conversion of native habitats through a nationwide sodsaver provision.

Native grasslands are one of the most rapidly disappearing ecosystems, and the many of the wildlife populations that depend on grasslands are likewise declining. Over the last decade, we have lost a significant amount of native prairie to agricultural expansion. Cropland conversion data reported to the Farm Service Agency in 2012 showed a 400,000 acre conversion of non-cropland acres between 2011 and 2012 alone.³ More recent analysis by researchers at the University of Wisconsin based on satellite data from the USDA, USGS, and others shows a net loss of three million acres of non-cropland, much of which was native prairie, from 2008 through 2012.⁴ Notably, the majority of this newly converted cropland was poor quality land that was considered marginal or unsuitable for cultivation.

The 2014 Farm Bill included a "sodsaver" provision that reduces federal subsidies for farmers who choose to convert native grasslands to cropland. Under the sodsaver provision, landowners may choose to break native prairie if they so desire, they are just not eligible for the same level of federal subsidies right away. These lands are not likely to be as productive for crops as prime cropland due to marginal soils, dry climatic conditions, or frequent flooding, and thus farmers should take on more of the risk for these lands.

Sodsaver is currently only applicable to six states in the Prairie Pothole region. However, conversion of native grasslands to cropland is not limited to the Prairie Pothole Region – in fact, many of the

states with the highest rates of conversion fall outside of this region.⁵ Some of the recent hotspots of agricultural expansion include western Kansas, Oklahoma, and the Texas panhandle.

We believe that it is critically important that sodsaver apply to all of the country, not just one region. Many of the remaining grassland areas outside of the Prairie Pothole Region are in drought-prone areas that are unlikely to ever be productive for crops; the risk of farming these unproductive lands should not fall on taxpayers. 2018 Farm Bill should make this important provision apply in every state.

3. Maintain the linkage between conservation compliance provisions and crop insurance premium subsidies.

Conservation compliance requires agricultural producers to refrain from draining wetlands on their property (swampbuster) and from farming highly erodible lands without a conservation plan (sodbuster) if the producers wish to maintain eligibility for certain farm program benefits, including receiving subsidies for crop insurance premiums. Originally enacted as part of the 1985 Food Security Act, this conservation compact between farmers and taxpayers been widely credited with turning the tide for wetlands loss on agricultural lands and for preventing significant amounts of soil erosion.⁶ Without conservation compliance provisions in the Farm Bill, millions of acres of wetland could be drained and countless acres of highly erodible land could be farmed without adequate conservation measures.

The 2018 Farm Bill must maintain the linkage between conservation compliance and crop insurance subsidies. Additionally, given the recent report by the USDA's Office of Inspector General showing that there are issues with implementation,⁷ it is also critical that we ensure that the wetland

Continued on Page 12

FARM BILL

Continued from Page 11

conservation goals of the program are fully met.

4. Increase acreage in Conservation Reserve Program

Created in the 1985 Farm Bill, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has been one of the most successful programs for the conservation of soil, water and wildlife habitat on private lands over the last 30 years. CRP provides millions of acres of critically-needed habitat for populations of ducks, grassland birds, and many other species. Each year, CRP is responsible for reducing hundreds of millions of tons of erosion and nutrient pollution into our nation's waterways.⁸

CRP also bring significant economic benefits, particularly to rural economies. Improved wildlife habitat through CRP results in increased economic activity in rural areas through hunting and other recreational uses. According to former Secretary Vilsack, the economic benefits related to CRP are estimated at \$3.1 billion annually.⁹

At one point, around 37 million acres of land were enrolled in CRP. But, over the last few Farm Bills, Congress has reduced the size of the program, with just 24 million acres currently allowed under the 2014 Farm Bill (see Figure 1 below). Because of this sharp decrease in enrollment, USDA is now faced with turning down thousands of CRP applications from those who want to enroll their land in the program. This decrease of millions of acres of land in conservation is likely to have a significant long-term impact on soil, water, and wildlife, in addition to rural economies. We recommend that the 2018 Farm Bill include a significant increase in CRP acreage.

5. Improve conservation programs to best meet our natural resource needs, ensuring strong provisions for wildlife.

Farm Bill conservation programs must continue to balance the pressing needs of soil, water, and wildlife. In addition to the

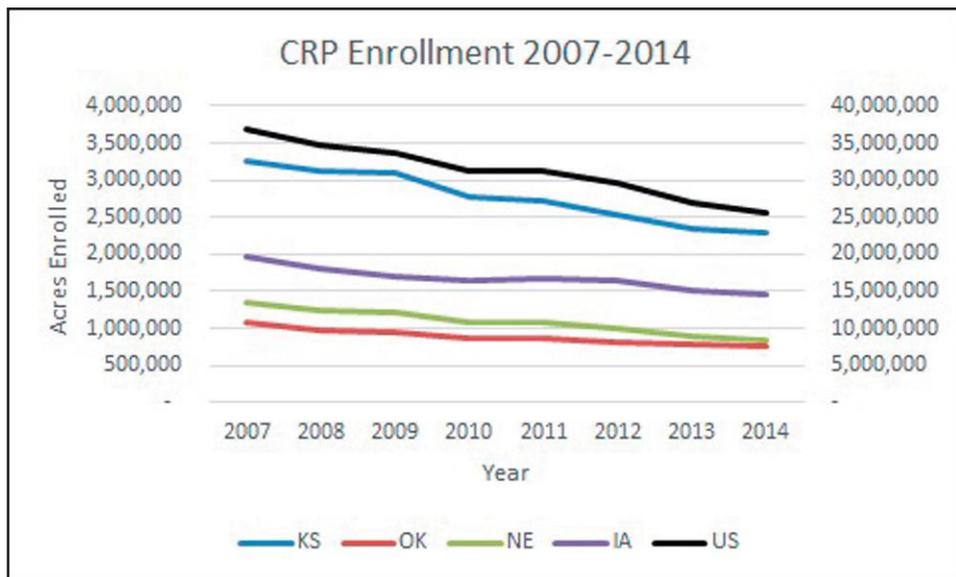


Figure 1. CRP acreage (combined general and continuous enrollment) by year for entire country (right axis) and for Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Iowa (left axis). Data sourced from FSA 2017.¹⁰

cuts to CRP in the last two Farm Bills, easements for wetlands and grasslands have also taken big hits, and these programs are consistently over-subscribed. Farm Bill working lands and partnership programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are also critically important programs with important wildlife components. The landscape initiatives and wildlife initiatives that NRCS has implemented over the last few years have had significant successes, including the removal of streams from the federal impaired streams list and the determination not to list certain wildlife species. Flexibility within programs to be able to best meet resource needs and to target programmatic resources to areas and species most in need is an important part of that success. We recommend that the 2018 Farm Bill include increased funding for easements for grasslands and wetlands, increased flexibility in RCPP, and a strong wildlife focus in working lands programs.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony. The 2018 Farm Bill presents both great challenges and great opportunities. We look forward to working with Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and the rest of the members of the Senate Agriculture Committee to ensure that the bill includes strong conservation provisions that will protect our soil, water and wildlife habitat.

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4 TJ Lark, JM Salmon, HK Gibbs. "Cropland Expansion Outpaces Agricultural and Biofuel Policies in the United States." Environmental Research Letters (April 2, 2015)

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6 Moseley, J. 2013. Conservation Compliance: A 25-Year Legacy of Stewardship. American Farmland Trust 2013.

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9 U.S. Department of Agriculture. "USDA Announces Conservation Reserve Program Results" <https://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2016/05/0105.xml>

10 U.S. Department of Agriculture-FSA "Conservation Reserve Program Statistics". <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/reports-and-statistics/conservation-reserve-program-statistics/index>.

Rhodes awarded for work in conservation

Gib Rhodes has a passion for introducing youth to hunting and conservation of the wild turkey, thereby preserving our hunting heritage. For his dedication to the National Wild Turkey

Federation's mission, Rhodes earned a national award.

Rhodes, a retired elementary school teacher from Madison, Kansas received one of five Roger M. Latham Sportsman\Wild Turkey Service Awards at the 41st annual NWTf Convention and Sport Show in Nashville.

"I'm humbled by this honor," Rhodes said. "I'm so lucky to have such a great chapter to help with all the events we do each year."

Roger M. Latham Sportsman\Wild Turkey Service Awards are given to NWTf members who are not employed as profes-

sional wildlife managers, but have made significant contributions to wild turkey conservation.

The NWTf determined this year's award winners based on how their work strengthens the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative. Rhodes has given enormous amounts of time and energy to organize award-winning JAKES (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics and Sportsmanship) and Women in the Outdoors events and guide his chapter to national awards as well. He has been a volunteer since he first attended an NWTf banquet in 2004.

"Dedicated volunteers, like Gib are the backbone of what we do," said George Thornton, NWTf CEO. "Carrying our mission forward to future generations is what Gib does every day."

Rhodes is only the third Kansan to be

honored with this NWTf conservation award. The other two were John Adams in 2006 and Roger Demanette in 2012.

About the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative.

The NWTf Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative is a charge that mobilizes science, fundraising and devoted volunteers to give the NWTf more energy and purpose than ever. Through this national initiative, NWTf has committed to raising \$1.2 billion to conserve or enhance more than 4 million acres of essential upland wildlife habitat, recruit and reactivate at least 1.5 million hunters and open access to 500,000 acres for hunting, shooting and outdoor enjoyment. Without hunters, there will be no wildlife or habitat. The NWTf is determined to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

Kid's Wildlife Friends

These birds laugh at the cold

Chickadees use all kinds of tricks to keep warm

By eNature

Though any bird that survives winter in the North amazes those of us that depend on furnaces and warm blankets, the black-capped chickadee may be the most incredible of all winter survivors.

"Black-capped Chickadees have a wonderful assortment of adaptations for the winter," said biologist Susan M. Smith, who has studied the black-capped chickadee as long as anyone. "Carefully hidden food items, dense winter coats, specially selected winter roost cavities, and perhaps most remarkable of all, the ability to go into nightly hypothermia, thus conserving large amounts of energy, greatly increases the chances of survival," she said.

A Cold-blooded Bird?

The ability to go into regulated hypothermia actually lowers the chickadee's body temperature in a controlled manner, down to about 12 or 15 degrees (F.) below their normal daytime temperature of 108 degrees (F.). This remarkable adaptation allows the bird to conserve



Black-capped chickadees are well equipped to survive winter's worst. © George Harrison

almost 25 percent of its hourly metabolic expenditure when the outside temperature is at freezing. The lower the outside temperature, the more energy conserved, Smith found.

"Chickadees are not the suburban wimps that some people think they are, said wildlife ecologist Margaret Clark Brittingham. For three winters in Wiscon-



Birds are not dependent on feeder food to survive winter.

© George Harrison

sin, she kept track of 576 black-capped chickadees. She found that every winter morning chickadees had to replace the fat they used overnight. As the small birds struggled against starvation and stinging cold, they earned her respect, too. "They are tough survivors that live close to the edge of life," she observed.

Have you seen Chickadees and other birds in your yard or garden? How are they coping with the onset of cold weather?

Keep wildlife wild, leave young wildlife alone

The arrival of spring means the arrival of newborn and just-hatched wildlife. These youngsters soon venture into the world on shaky legs or fragile wings and are discovered by people living, playing, or working nearby. Every year, the lives of many young wild creatures are disturbed by people who take young wildlife from the wild in a well-intentioned attempt to “save” them.

These well-meant acts of kindness tend to have the opposite result. Instead of being left to learn their place in the world, young wildlife removed from the wild are denied important natural learning experiences which help them survive on their own. Most people quickly find that they can’t really care for young wildlife, and many of the animals soon die in the hands of well-meaning people. Young wildlife that does survive human “assistance” miss experiences that teach them to fend for themselves. If these animals are released back into the wild, their chances of survival are reduced. Often, the care given to young wildlife results in some attachment to humans and the ani-

mals may return to places where people live, only to be attacked by domestic animals, or hit by cars. Some animals become nuisances and people have been injured by once-“tamed” wildlife.

Avoid these problems by following one simple rule when coming upon young wildlife: If You Care, Leave Them There! It may be difficult to do, but this is a real act of compassion. Generally young mammals are visited by the adults only a few times a day to avoid leaving traces that attract predators. For instance, a nest of bunnies will only be visited by the adult female twice per day to nurse the young. The young wildlife are quite safe when left alone because their color patterns and lack of scent help them remain undetected. Avoid nest and den areas of young wildlife and restrain all pets. What if you find a young bird that has fallen from a nest? Baby birds found on the ground may be safely picked up and placed in a nearby bush or tree. Adult birds (and other kinds of wildlife) are not disturbed by human scent and will not abandon their young if handled by

people.

Leave fawns (young deer) where they are found. Fawns are safest when left alone because their camouflaging color helps them remain undetected until the doe returns. If sympathetic people repeatedly visit a fawn, it can prolong the separation from the doe and delay needed feeding. Unlike deer, newborn moose calves remain in close proximity to their mothers who, in contrast to a white-tailed doe, will actively defend calves against danger. An adult cow moose weighing over 600 pounds will chase, kick or stomp potential predators, people included.

Only when young wildlife are found injured or with their dead mother may the young be assisted, but must then be delivered immediately to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. It is illegal to possess most wildlife in Kansas without a permit. Information on young wildlife and a list of wildlife rehabilitators is posted on the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism website <http://kdwpt.state.ks.us>.

GEESE

Continued from Page 9

of his spread and a four-speaker caller on the downwind side. The downwind caller plays a low feeding murmur that he keeps playing all the time. He adjusts the volume on the other caller depending on the reaction of the birds and the strength of the wind. “If the wind is howling, I’ll turn up the volume. I mainly use recordings of clucks and individual sounds rather than large flock noises. The key is to adjust the volume on the fly, making changes based on how the birds react,” he says.

8. GIVE GEESSE A DIFFERENT LOOK

Variety can be the spice that attracts snow geese to your decoy spread, says Keith Geissert. He and 11 other avid waterfowlers hunt from an old Canada goose pit situated along the edge of a pond outside Carlisle, Illinois. “The uniqueness of this setting allows us to give the birds a different look,” he says. “The pit is right on the edge of a pond adjacent to a cornfield. We put out 1,000 full-bodies, but we also deploy 250 to 300 floaters along the water’s edge—that makes our spread stand out. To add movement, we scatter a few dozen windsock decoys throughout the

spread.”

Geissert and his hunting partners leave an open landing zone—about 30 yards in diameter—around the pit. They pack the floater decoys tight in the shallow water in front of the pit and run the full-bodies along the shoreline and back into the cornfield. “The geese often try to land directly on top of the pit. They just want to get into that landing zone,” he says.

9. GET LOST IN THE CROWD

If you think camouflaging a few hunters in an open field is difficult, try hiding a small army of waterfowlers in a snow goose spread. Veteran guides such as Vandemore and Brown typically conceal as many as a dozen layout blinds among their massive spreads.

“We keep the blinds side by side for safety and so we can communicate, but this also creates one solid rise to hide,” Vandemore says. “That can be a problem when there are a lot of eyes looking down on you and watching for anything that may appear out of place.”

The trick, according to Vandemore, is to use massive numbers of decoys to help conceal the blinds. “I create custom motion stakes to elevate the decoys around the blinds,” he says. “This makes the profiles of the blinds harder to spot.”

Similarly, Brown stakes dozens of SilloSocks around his layout blinds. “A mass of moving decoys not only helps hide the blinds’ profiles, but also disguises subtle movements that hunters sometimes make,” he explains. “With multiple decoys bobbing and weaving in the wind, minute movements go unnoticed.”

10. Call from Multiple Directions

Geese don’t always approach a spread from the same angle. This realization caused Keller to begin aiming his e-caller speakers in different directions throughout his spread. “We position our speakers on their sides, at 45-degree angles, and even straight up,” he says. “That’s one direction people forget, but it’s typically where the geese are. The key is sound dispersion. You want incoming geese to hear calling from every direction.”

Keller employs as many as five amplifiers and 25 speakers. He even incorporates a number of car speakers, which he says work better than power horns in creating a constant low feeding murmur. “We use recordings of multiple individual vocalizations and play them at various volume levels. The goal is not to sound like thousands of geese but like 50 to 80 individual birds in a large flock. You can never have too much sound, but it’s the sound spread over a large area that works for us,” he says.

Ears ringing?

By Neal S Shera
Fancy Creek Range

As a firearms enthusiast I'm always happy to share information about any topic when asked. One of which has been concerning the proposed Hearing Protection Act or HPA. The recent changes in the political climate have created an opportunity for a great deal of pro gun legislation to be passed at the federal level. This is an almost unheard of situation as most of the laws previously passed have maintained or curbed our rights as gun owners. I hope I can alleviate any concerns about the subject.

Let's start at the beginning shall we with Hiram Maxim, famous machine gun designer, also is credited with building the first silencer or suppressor which was patented in 1909. Silencers of course catch the expanding gases released when a bullet exits a barrel which reduces the report of the firearm. This was a response to the new wave of smokeless power used to drive the bullets of that period with increased velocity; the sharp crack firearms now make. In reality the design of such a device is quite simple and easy to manufacture. Now some of these devices were used for nefarious means during the violence of the Prohibition Era albeit in any extremely limited capacity. Yet that was enough for the U.S. Federal Government to make the decision that such equipment were to be regulated in the first major firearms control act. The National Firearms Act of 1934 or NFA sought to reduce the accessibility of certain guns to the general public. This list includes, short barrel rifles, short barrel shotguns, machine guns, destructive devices (grenades and cannons) and a

category called any other weapon. Suppressors have remained in the classification ever since and have been treated as a pariah by the general public which is fueled by misconceptions and false representation of the tool.

So today if you want a suppressor you have to go through a lengthy process to acquire it. After one researches the information to reach a decision on what make and model is the best you have to find a dealer. Now any sporting goods store or gun shop will not be able to help procure one. A specially licensed dealer in your state of residence must be found and that might include some lengthy travel to their location. After you found one and visit their shop you must buy the suppressor so as to withhold the serial number of the device for you alone. Now depending on type this can be from \$200 up to \$2500 in cost. You then can begin to fill out the appropriate forms in duplicate. You must also have a separate check or money order of \$200 for the ATF ready to send with the forms along with photos and fingerprints. Now once that is done the long wait of several months (6-10) begins for the background check to be done and the form of ownership with its stamp is returned to you. Then you can drive back to the dealer and then pick it up. I won't even go into detail regarding all the special rules involved with owning these devices which are numerous.

Now to many people including myself this seems like an overreaction to a device that by itself poses no harm to anyone unless used like a blunt instrument similar to metal pipe. When I first became interested in becoming an owner of such a device only a handful of states

allowed them for its citizens. Yes many state legislators went further then the federal government and outright banned them. That situation has slowly changed in the course of my interest in shooting. The reason why is in the practical nature of the device. Shooters and hunters do their best to use hearing protection while engaged in any sport but that is not always possible. So why not have every tool available? It's sometimes a hindrance to have earmuffs or other covers on the head for protection. It's also true that those devices can never match the performance of a suppressor at the end of a barrel. Most good ear muff have a decibel reduction of around 20 which is just barely adequate to drop the rating out of the danger zone. Most suppressors are in the 30s or even better. The noise is reduced but also the felt blast of the expanding gases is contained making the experience even more pleasant.

Now that most states allow for suppressor ownership and use in hunting activities the number individual owners has skyrocketed. Now this has created a demand that simply is getting fed up with the shortage of available units and the wait times. Suppressors are regulated on the manufacturing level as well so there are limited numbers of companies making them. Many people want that to change and now the HPA has been brought forth to both houses of Congress. The bills (H.R. 367 and S 59) are meant to change that by removing them from the NFA and treating them like normal firearms in terms of sales and ownership. So there will be controls and oversight

Continued on Page 16

Scholarship available

The Emporia Community Foundation (ECF) is pleased to announce a new scholarship available through the What's In Outdoors Fund. The What's In Outdoors Fund, established by Phil Taunton, is now offering a \$1,000 scholarship to a Lyon County 4-H graduating senior beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

Any Lyon County 4-H member that is a senior graduating from high school and meets the scholarship criteria is eligible to apply. The criteria includes – attending Emporia State University, have a Kansas-based career goal and major in a wildlife or nature-based curriculum, which can include

communications.

The criteria and application may be found on the Emporia Community Foundation's website, www.emporiacf.org by clicking on the "Scholarships" page under the "Grants" tab. Applications are due to the ECF office by May 1, 2017.

The What's In Outdoors Fund was created to serve those interested in getting youth and families "Outside for a Better Inside!" The fund will provide support for various causes, as well as provide a scholarship to Kansas kids interested in making a career out of environmental education, photography, journalism, communications and

conserving our natural resources.

What's In Outdoors believes in the Kansas Children's "Outdoor Bill of Rights" which states that "Every child should have the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of Kansas history, assess a natural environment, camp under the stars, explore nature, learn to swim, play on a team, follow a trail, catch fish and harvest game, participate in the shooting sports and play in a safe environment".

For more information regarding the scholarship contact Shirley Antes, Executive Director or Loni Heinen, Program Officer, 342-9304

Fishing club gains traction at Seaman High School

WILD Kansas, Fishing's Future among organizations providing resources to club

By Josh Rouse

The Topeka Capital-Journal

A fishing club at Seaman High School is beginning to gain traction, seeing an increase in student interest and more engagement under new leadership.

Seaman biology teacher Jessica Popescu, who oversees the fishing club, said the group had "flown under the radar" for the past couple of years, with no scheduled meetings or advertised events she could remember.

At the beginning of this school year, she said a group of boys she knew from coaching track and field approached her about being the new sponsor for the club after the previous sponsor retired, and they scrambled to get a booth together for the school's annual Club Fair.

"We had 150 kids sign up at the fair, but approximately 50 regular members now," she said.

Kody Orester, club president, has helped to revitalize the organization this year. "Some of my friends and I really enjoy fishing and we did it all summer," Orester said. "We thought it would be a good idea if we created a club at our high school and dedicated it to fishing. There was one last year, but the officers didn't do anything with it and we wanted to. So we chose an awesome sponsor and we are planning on doing great things with it and getting kids outdoors, which unfortunately is becoming a rarity."

Popescu said Erie Unified School District 101 superintendent Steve Woolf and KVOE radio host Phil Taunton have served as mentors for her personally in starting the program. Woolf is the organizer of WILD Kansas, a student organization that focuses on activities that promote the environment, conservation and outdoor

activities. Taunton is a representative of the Emporia chapter of Fishing's Future, a group that looks to reconnect kids with the outdoors.

"Steve, being in charge of WILD, has done some amazing outdoor activities with kids, and I really am looking forward to their summer event this year, as well as becoming more a part of WILD in the future," Popescu said. "Phil has amazing contacts with people all over the state, and he has kept me updated on various events in the region."

Woolf said the WILD program has multiple aspects to it in addition to fishing education for students, including hunting, trapping, gardening sustainable agriculture and camping. "This is just another aspect of what we do," Woolf said. "Jessica heard us speak to that last year and she just goes, 'We gotta get that going.'"

The WILD program works with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and received a grant to help pay for equipment and cover other costs. "We teach hunter's safety, archery safety, fishing, trapping — all of the stuff that the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism does — and they provide all of that stuff for free," Woolf said.

Woolf said the WILD program will do whatever it can to help schools who want to join.

"I really appreciate what Jessica's done," said Woolf, who used to teach in the Seaman district. "I think, because Seaman's set up with that wildlife area, they're going to be able to do some really cool things."

Popescu said the effort to start the club has mostly been from within the school, but in the future she would look to branch out and talk to other educators about fishing clubs across the state. "It's a little

intimidating and a lot to be in charge of, but we just elected officers so I'm hoping that this delegation will really get the ball rolling," Popescu said. "The kids have great ideas. Our vice president has already suggested that we teach little fishing tips during our upcoming meetings, such as the correct way to tie on a hook."

Popescu said the response for the club from the Seaman community and among outdoors enthusiasts in Kansas has been great. "Since starting the club, I have been extremely lucky to have the help of many individuals within the state that are passionate about the outdoors," Popescu said. "I haven't had to ask too many people for help, because so many have reached out to me on their own, from parents to professionals. I'm extremely grateful for this, and don't think the club would be as successful without the support."

So far, the club has designed its own T-shirts, chosen officer positions, organized two fishing trips to local ponds and received third place in the Seaman homecoming parade. Popescu said the club also is planning to attend a Fishing's Future angler education certification class at Kansas State.

She said that in five years she would like to see an organized, end-of-the-year fishing trip take place at some place such as Table Rock Lake in the Ozarks. "I have a lot of fishing experience on that lake, so that would be ideal," Popescu said. "I think we are going to remain a club where we can just be outside, fish and learn some ecology while we are at it."

"We have little competitions on our own excursions for who can catch the most and/or biggest fish, but aside from that we would really need boats in order to become more competitive, and that isn't something that is particularly easy to come by."

EARS

Continued from Page 15

regarding as to ownership. Currently they are the most viewed bills on the government's website. This will vastly improve on cost, availability and exposure for the general public. If you want to find out the difference for yourself go

to a dealer that has the ability for you to test a demonstration model out and see for yourself. For those still wondering about the validity of the argument please research European countries where several encourage suppressor ownership to reduce impact on the general populace. There is also the fact that the USMC is investigating the benefits of suppressors and equipping an entire battalion's small arms in order to see if it will help

combat the mounting medical expenses of hearing loss for our veterans.

I urge everyone to get educated on the subject matter so that you will see the benefit of suppressing rifles, shotguns and pistols to further increase the safety and enjoyment of the shooting sports. Kansas has been leading the effort on the state level for several years and now its time to do the same everywhere.

Kansas paddlefish season opens March 15

Anglers are eager for warm weather and time on the water, and one of the hallmarks of spring fishing is the opening of the paddlefish snagging season. But hold on, it's not as easy as showing up on opening day. While there are several rivers in southeast Kansas where paddlefish snagging is allowed, conditions must be right for paddlefish to be present.

The Kansas paddlefish season runs March 15–May 15 during the annual spring spawning run. Paddlefish may be taken in posted areas inside Chetopa and Burlington city parks on the Neosho River; on the Neosho River at Iola, downstream from the dam to the city limits; on the Marais des Cygnes River below Osawatomie Dam, downstream to a posted boundary; on the Marais des Cygnes River on the upstream boundary

of the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area, downstream to the Kansas-Missouri border; and the Browning Oxbow of the Missouri River (Doniphan County).

Water temperatures of 50-55 degrees and an increase in river flow will start paddlefish moving upstream out of reservoirs. Most Kansas paddlefish are caught from the Neosho River at Chetopa, but for paddlefish to be present there requires a significant increase in river flow. It's a good idea to call local Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism offices or area bait shops for river and angler updates before traveling to a site.

Paddlefish have been around for more than 300 million years, and these large, prehistoric looking fish are unique in several ways. First, they are similar to sharks in that their skin is scaleless and

smooth, and their skeleton is made of cartilage rather than bones. And second, they are filter feeders, eating only microscopic zooplankton. As a result, they can only be caught by snagging. Kansas waters commonly produce paddlefish weighing 30-60 pounds, and the world record paddlefish that weighed 144 pounds was caught in Kansas.

Paddlefish anglers must have a paddlefish permit (\$12.50 for adults, \$7.50 for youth), which includes six carcass tags. Because the permit includes carcass tags, it must be purchased in-person from a license vendor or by calling 1-800-918-2877, in which case permit and carcass tags will be mailed. Permit-holders can snag up to two fish per day,

Continued on Page 19

Kansas boat taxes affordable

If you're a Kansas boat owner or are thinking of buying a boat, you should know that property taxes on recreational boats have gone down as much as 75 percent since 2013. Before that, Kansas boat owners paid property taxes based on an assessed value that was 30 percent of the boat's market worth. So if you owned a \$30,000 boat, the assessed value was \$9,000, and depending on the mill levee in the county you lived in, you could have paid more than \$1,000 in annual property taxes.

Boats must be registered with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) to operate on public waters, and that registration fee is just \$32.50 for three years. Since counties use

KDWPT's registration lists to assess property taxes, many Kansans opted to register their boats in neighboring states where the property taxes were much less. In fact, according to the Oklahoma Department of Conservation, more than 5,000 Kansas boats were registered there in 2013.

Reducing the tax rate on Kansas boats required an amendment to the state's constitution, and the Kansas legislature put that question on the ballot in November 2012. Voters approved the amendment and a new law took effect in 2013, reducing the assessment rate in phases – 11.5 percent in 2014 to 5 percent in 2015 where it remains.

The result has been a significant reduction in property taxes on boats. Take that \$30,000 boat for example. If you own that

boat in Pratt County, where the mill levee is 120, you'll pay just \$180 annually.

To get the word out, KDWPT began a campaign titled: "Own It Here, Use It Here, Register It Here." The idea is to encourage Kansas boat owners to voluntarily register their boats locally, but KDWPT law enforcement officers will also step up enforcement of the law, which requires boats to be registered in the state of principal use. Boat registration fees fund boater education programs, construction and enhancement of boat access facilities, as well as other recreational boating programs. And Kansas counties depend on property taxes to fund county services.

Remember: Own It Here, Use It Here, Register It Here.

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Please make checks payable to Kansas Wildlife Federation.

MAIL TO: Kansas Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 771282, Wichita, KS 67277-1282

Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism gets new licensing system

In late February, the computer license sales and reservation system the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) has used for many years will be no more. A new and improved system, provided by Active Network, will go into full operation. Active Network has provided the software and point-of-sale hardware for 11 years that allowed KDWPT to accept campsite and cabin reservations and sell licenses online, maintaining all license records electronically. That contract expired and a new contract, with some changes, is now in place.

License buyers and campers won't notice a big difference; however, the current license sales system will shut down at 9:45 p.m. on Feb. 18, and the new system will be online at 8 a.m. on Feb. 22. No license or permit sales will be available through the system for roughly three days. The campsite and cabin

reservation system will shut down at 12:01 a.m., Feb. 20 and go back online at 6 p.m., Feb. 21.

While it may be inconvenient for anyone who tries to buy a license or make a reservation during the downtime, this time is important to allow data to be transferred, configurations to be completed and to ensure everything is working properly before going live. The new system will retain the KDWPT numbers of everyone who purchased a hunting or fishing license in the old system, and there will be no changes in pricing.

The new system will provide some advantages to users, including allowing customers to purchase hunting and fishing licenses at the same time they make camping or cabin reservations. It will allow customers to reprint licenses within 48 hours if they were unable to print during the transaction. Other features include allowing customers to

browse available licenses and permits before they make a purchase, buy licenses or permits for multiple years when available (such as buying a 2017 hunting license and a 2016 HIP stamp) and logging in with an email address to edit personal information on record such as address and phone number.

One significant change with the new system involves permits that have carcass tags attached, such as deer, turkey, elk, and antelope, which could have been purchased from home and printed out on a desktop printer under the old system. This caused many issues for Law Enforcement since there was no way to prohibit someone from printing multiple carcass tags with one permit. In the new system, permits with carcass tags will have to be purchased and issued through a license agent or over the phone, in which case the permit/carcass tag will be mailed to the customer.

Tuttle Creek selected for BlueCHIP award

Tuttle Creek State Park near Manhattan was recently chosen to receive a \$2,500 BlueCHIP Award by BlueCross BlueShield of Kansas (BCBSKS) and the Kansas Recreation and Parks Association (KRPA). BlueCHIP Awards are issued through a community health improvement program created seven years ago by KRPA and BCBSKS to recognize and reward Kansas communities that encourage and support healthy lifestyles through programs, initiatives, policies and/or community-wide events.

In addition to Tuttle Creek State Park, communities recognized this year include Baldwin City, Derby, City of Lindsborg,

Shawnee County – Topeka, and Wellington. Each received \$2,500 to assist with continued efforts to improve the health of their communities. The awards were presented at the 2017 KRPA Annual Conference and Trade Show in Manhattan.

According to Tuttle Creek State Park manager Todd Lovin, the BlueChip award will be used to purchase additional canoes, kayaks and paddling equipment. The state park sponsors several floats on the Kansas River each year, and boats and equipment are made available to those who don't have their own.

Tuttle Creek State Park includes four

units (River Pond, Fancy Creek, Cedar Ridge and Randolph) around Tuttle Creek Reservoir. In addition to a swimming beach, boat ramps, courtesy docks and dump stations, the park offers 159 water/electric campsites, eight electric/water/sewer campsites, 24 electric-only campsites, 500 primitive campsites and 11 rental cabins. Activities offered include hiking, biking and equestrian trails; disc golf; volleyball; horseshoes; a state-of-the-art shooting range; and archery range. Learn more about Tuttle Creek State Park at www.ksoutdoors.com or call the park office at 785-539-7941.

Let's stop insulting swamps

Paul Baicich and Wayne Peterson
Birding Community E-bulletin

We have an appeal in difficult political times to support swampland.

Alas, President Donald Trump is not the first politician to invoke a metaphor of "draining the swamp" as a political rallying cry. Leaders from both sides of the aisle have used the phrase over the decades, including Ronald Regan and Nancy Pelosi. During the George W. Bush years, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld even committed to "drain the swamp" of terrorism.

Unfortunately, swamps have gotten a

bad rap in the process. They should really be considered an extremely valuable part of Nature, as opposed to sites deserving derision, abuse... and draining.

Essentially, a swamp is a forested or semi-forested wetland containing standing water, at least seasonally, or continuously slow-moving water. Swamps can recharge groundwater (e.g., the Everglades) and they can serve as natural water-treatment areas, acting as filters and purifiers. They can also aid in flood control. Swamps are good at capturing and storing carbon, becoming an important resource in the efforts to mitigate climate change. They support a diversity

of animal life, including unique and fascinating birds, from waterfowl to long-legged waders and warblers to raptors.

To read about why swamps do not deserve the reputation as useless ecosystems and why the political metaphor needs to be dropped, check out a late December op-ed piece in The Washington Post by Adam Rosenblatt, a Fellow at the American Association for the Advancement of Science:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/12/29/please-no-more-calls-to-drain-the-swamp-its-an-insult-to-swamps/?utm_term=.74f45401cfb7

Recognizing the outdoor industry for what it is

By **Kris Millgate**
Hatch magazine

Most moms save their child's hand-prints smeared on construction paper with craft paint. I'm saving a smattering of blue yarn embellished with natural hues of brown and green. The keepsake is art in its most juvenile form and yet it is a masterpiece.

The blue yarn outlines our nation's major rivers. Columbia, Colorado, Mississippi to name a few. The Gulf and Great Lakes are marked too. I'd like to say I've fished them all, but I haven't. I'd like to say they're all pristine, but they're far from it. The Stream Protection Rule was supposed to help with that, but now it's gone.

The Trump administration rolled back the Obama administration rule by tapping the rarely used Congressional Review Act.

"It's like the rusty screwdriver in the bottom of the toolbox that doesn't get used a lot," says John Gale, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Conservation Director. "But if it does get used, in this case, stream protection goes away."

The rationale behind rolling back the ties on stream protection is applauded by some as an effort to save a struggling coal industry and its 65,971 jobs, even though automation and the rise of natural gas—not regulation—are widely recognized as the main drivers of coal's decline. What will struggle instead? The outdoor industry and its 6.1 million jobs. But is outdoor really an industry? Yes.

The American Sportfishing Association released its 2017 report on Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing by U.S. Congressional District this week. Fishing relies on all those waterways mapped out in blue yarn. The report shows 46 million anglers equal \$115 billion for America. Fishing, a sector of the outdoor industry, creates 800,000 jobs.

"A top priority for members of congress is the ability to identify jobs and economic opportunity in their districts," says Mike



Photo: Kris Millgate

Leonard, American Sportfishing Association conservation director. "It's critically important that we provide accurate, detailed information to decision makers on the tremendous value that recreational fishing provides to the nation."

Beyond hook, there's bullet. Plus biking, hiking, paddling climbing, camping, wildlife watching and stargazing. The companies catering to outdoor customers are increasing in clout. According to Outdoor Industry Association, Outdoor Retailer, a trade show held in Salt Lake City for two decades, brings \$45 million into Utah annually. OIA announced last week it's taking its honey of a show away from the Beehive State. OIA doesn't want Outdoor Retailer in a state governed by leaders opposed to protecting public lands for all like the newly established Bears Ears National Monument in Utah's red rock country.

"It is important to our membership, and to our bottom line, that we partner with states and elected officials who share our views on the truly unique American value of public lands for the people and conserving our outdoor heritage for the next generation," says Amy Roberts, Outdoor Industry Association executive director. "Outdoor Industry Association will continue to support the efforts of Outdoor Retailer to seek a new home for the trade show."

There's bound to be a state or two wanting the show and its \$45 million annually not to mention the \$646 billion generated by the outdoor recreation nationwide.

The reality is everyone's play is someone else's pay. Outdoor is an industry, a newly recognized industry, but an industry nonetheless. The jobs, and joys, represented in rivers of blue yarn make the art I'm saving priceless in more ways than one.

FISH

Continued from Page 17

and six for the season. Unless exempt, paddlefish snaggers must also have a Kansas fishing license.

Paddlefish may be snagged using pole and line with not more than two single or treble hooks. Barbless hooks must be

used in Chetopa City Park. Catch and release is allowed in Burlington, Chetopa, and Iola, except that once attached to a stringer, a fish becomes part of the daily creel limit. There is a 24-inch minimum length limit for fish snagged in the Missouri River boundary waters, and there is a 34-inch minimum length limit for fish snagged on the Marias des Cygnes River.

Immediately upon harvest, anglers must sign a carcass tag, record the coun-

ty, date and time of harvest, and attach the tag to the lower jaw of the paddlefish. Paddlefish caught out of season or in non-snagging areas may be kept only if they are hooked inside the mouth.

For information, consult your 2017 Kansas Fishing Regulation Summary, or visit www.ksoutdoors.com and click "Fishing," "Fishing Regulations," then "Paddlefish Snagging."

Westar Energy invites area youth to hunt turkeys

Westar Energy invites youth 12-17 years old to its spring turkey hunt, April 1-11, 2017, at Jeffrey Energy Center, located seven miles north of St. Marys. The event is open to young hunters who have not harvested a turkey. Westar Energy Green Team volunteers, who are veteran hunters, will be available to assist the youth and their mentors.

Youth must be accompanied by an adult mentor, preferably one who does not have turkey hunting experience. These hunts will take place in enclosed blinds around small crop fields scattered through

the plant's property, where turkeys are abundant.

A shotgun is all the equipment a youth needs to participate. Hunters 15 and younger will need to purchase a youth spring turkey permit. Hunters 16 and older will need to purchase a Unit 3 turkey permit and have a hunting license, and a hunter education certificate. If they haven't completed Hunter Education, they need an apprentice hunting license.

Hunts will take place primarily during weekend mornings, but weekdays and afternoons are possible, based on volunteer

guide availability. Registration will be open through Friday, March 17, or until all slots are filled. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for inexperienced mentors. Please contact Barb Cornelius at 785-575-8125 to apply or for more information.

The Westar Energy Green Team is a group of employees and retirees who volunteer for environmental projects across Kansas. They work closely with conservation groups, agencies and schools, and complete between 50 and 70 projects per year.

Kid's Wildlife Friends

Winter wildlife quiz

North American animals have numerous strategies for surviving the winter. Some migrate to warmer climes, others head for a long winter's nap, and some stay where they are and rely on fur, speed, fat, teeth, and claws to keep them safe, warm, and well fed. How much do you know about the winter behavior of North America's animals? Test your winter wildlife knowledge by taking our quiz. (Scroll down to see the answers.)

1. Which animal has the densest, warmest fur on earth?

- A. Beaver
- B. Sea Otter
- C. Polar Bear
- D. Mink
- E. Muskox

2. How much weight might an adult Grizzly Bear gain before retiring for the winter?

- A. 50 pounds
- B. 100 pounds
- C. 200 pounds
- D. 300 pounds
- E. 400 pounds
- F. All of the above

3. Which animal remains active all winter, and doesn't retire to a den for a sustained period?

- A. Eastern Chipmunk
- B. White-tailed Prairie Dog
- C. Red Squirrel
- D. Black Bear
- E. Polar Bear

4. Choose the animal species that does NOT

regularly appear in a white-furred form.

- A. Eastern Gray Squirrel
- B. Arctic Fox
- C. Grizzly Bear
- D. Least Weasel
- E. Gray Wolf
- F. Black Bear

5. Which of the following species will travel to a new area for the winter?

- A. Manatee
- B. Caribou
- C. Bison
- D. Snow Goose
- E. Snowy Owl
- F. All of the above

6. Animals generally put on fat for two reasons: warmth and food reserves. Which of the following species reaches the heaviest weight?

- A. Grizzly Bear
- B. Polar Bear
- C. Northern Elephant Seal
- D. Walrus

7. Match the predator (1-7) with the prey (a-g) that it commonly eats.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Arctic Fox | a) fish |
| 2. Lynx | b) squid |
| 3. Northern River Otter | c) clams |
| 4. Mink | d) seal |
| 5. Polar Bear | e) snowshoe hare |
| 6. Walrus | f) lemming |
| 7. Northern Elephant Seal | g) muskrat |

Answers on Page 23

Bill to cut Forest Service and BLM Enforcement is a poacher's dream, sportsman's nightmare

H.R. 622 puts America's 640 million acres of national forests, parks and wildlife refuges in danger

By Ben Long
Outdoor Life

My friend Greg Munther is a master bowhunter who pursues Coues whitetails on public lands of southern Arizona. His trail cameras record a lot more than local wildlife.

Frequently, he records shady characters afoot at night, running drugs, smuggling illegal immigrants, or handling the logistics for other "mules" and "coyotes."

Most of the time, America's 640 million acres of national forests, parks, and wildlife refuges are pretty peaceful places. But they are not immune to very real threats: drug runners, meth labs, pot farms and worse. Not to mention the growing population increases the frequency of less dramatic crime like vandalism, arson, poaching, illegal pot hunting and destruction of natural resources.

That is why H.R. 622, introduced by Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, is such a menace. Chaffetz would do away with law enforcement officers on National Forests and Bureau of Land Management—millions of acres where Americans hunt and fish.

"It's time to get rid of the BLM and US Forest Service police. If there is a problem your local sheriff is the first and best line of defense," Chaffetz said in a press release. "By restoring local control in law enforcement, we enable federal agencies and county sheriffs to each focus on their respective core missions."

Chaffetz has it dead wrong. His bill coddles criminals and handcuffs the police. There are a handful of highly politicized examples where local law enforcement and agency LEOs have experienced some friction, but those examples are the rare exception.

Much more common is the case of Brad Treat, one of the few LEOs who patrolled the 2 million acres of the Flathead National Forest where I live in north-western Montana. Treat was a local kid done good—and a local hero. Brad was a standout high school athlete who became a Forest Service LEO in his home county. In 2016, Treat was killed by a grizzly bear. The crowd at his funeral packed the bleachers at the local high school football field.

Flathead County Sheriff Chuck Curry was one of Treat's pallbearers. "Brad was

one of us," Curry said in a eulogy. "The law enforcement community was better because of you. You were a great colleague, a great problem solver, but most importantly you were a friend."

In the real world, Forest Service LEOS, state game wardens, and local sheriff's deputies work together to keep our public lands safe, healthy and productive for everyone to share.

Chaffetz says he would replace agency LEOs with block grants for local counties. But that idea fails upon closer inspection. Local deputies will always be under political pressure to patrol where the people live—not patrol the backwoods. Our national forests would naturally become neglected and become a no-man's zone, claimed by the lawless.

Earlier in February, Rep. Chaffetz introduced another bill that would have liquidated 3.3 million acres of public land open to hunting and fishing across the West. Hunters and anglers went ballistic and forced Chaffetz to kill his own bill.

Chaffetz needs to listen to sportsmen once again and side with the people who cherish and protect our public lands—not the criminals who abuse and exploit them.

ESU will soon have a new Aquatic Research and Outreach Center

By Alex Turley
KVOE.COM

A new facility is planned for the north end of campus and adjacent to Interstate 35 where aquatic ecology research and training could have a worldwide impact on generations to come. Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Brent Thomas told KVOE about the importance of aquatic research.

The largest contributor to the project so far is Trusler Foundation with \$200,000. Twenty other donors, including the Westar Energy Foundation, Dr. Carl and Kay Prophet, and Kansas Rep. Mark Schreiber and his wife, Angie, have given a combined total of over \$231,000, putting this project well on the way to total funding. Thomas believes that new center could be

a "game changer" for ESU.

Research opportunities at the Aquatic Research and Outreach Center, or AROC, will provide high-impact learning for students while changing lives for the common good, supporting Emporia State's vision. Mark Schreiber, who was an original student of the facility, fondly joked about the double-wide trailer aquatic research center -- but he then explained the need he saw.

The outreach efforts within the Emporia community and beyond will include but are not limited to working with and educating preschool children; K-12 students; Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; 4-H members; prospective students; Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism; Nature Conservancy; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Westar and Wolf Creek employees. Schreiber emphasized the

importance of the outreach aspect.

During an academic school year, 20 to 30 students per year could use the Aquatic Research and Outreach Center for their research projects. Over 500 elementary and secondary education science majors will also use the Aquatic Research and Outreach Center because they are required to take courses that prepare them to provide their students with opportunities for hands-on activities to learn about biology.

The Aquatic Research and Outreach Center aims to increase the number of high-impact learning activities available to students and individuals across the state; increase collaboration efforts with local K-12 schools to educate the state on aquatic topics; and increase the number of professionals trained at Emporia State for careers related to aquatic sciences.

Kid's Wildlife Friends

Kick off spring with 21 crazy fun ideas for you and your kids

By Mary Sears

Highlights for Children

Spring has sprung. Somewhere birds are chirping. Is it still chilly in your neck of the woods? Try these activities and the temperature won't matter.

1. Spruce up your footwear. Decorate plain white sneakers. Using paint pens, doodle your own designs or paint blue skies, wispy clouds, green trees, and lavender flowers.

2. Watch nature in action. Tour your town or an area park looking for budding leaves, early blooms, and robins.

3. Fashion a kids-only clubhouse with blankets tossed over a circle of lawn chairs. Serve lunch outside.

4. Tie-dye T-shirts in soft pastels or wild primary colors.

5. Collect rocks, paint them sky blue, leaf green, sun yellow, and cloud white. Display them indoors on the kitchen table, or outdoors around your mailbox or ringing a favorite tree.

6. Tap your inner forester. Collect



leaves from local trees, identify them, and make rubbings.

7. Hang a bird feeder. Then keep it stocked with goodies for feathered guests.

8. Spring clean to music to finish faster. Reduce your clutter by 30 odds and ends.

9. Go fake camping. Grill veggie or turkey burgers outdoors, sing songs, and feast on s'mores. Sleep inside in a makeshift tent, or a sleeping bag, on the family room, living room, or basement

floor.

10. Learn birdcalls online. Instead of words, use your personal chirps to say hi to other family members.

11. Play catch with water balloons (outside) . . . and keep a stack of beach towels handy for the inevitable explosions.

12. Host a tea party outside on a blanket. Serve Rice Krispies treats in pastel colors (dye the marshmallows with a few drops of food coloring).

13. Make a spring bouquet with tissue-paper flowers. Fold tissue paper back and forth in a fan effect; fold in half and secure with a chenille-stick 'stem.'

14. Anticipate the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer. Hose down your swing set, hammock, or porch swing now.

15. Fly a kite, row a boat, or take up archery.

16. Support your local Little League

Continued on Page 23

Milkweed for Monarchs

Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on the leaves of milkweed, the only host plant for this iconic butterfly species. As such, milkweed is critical for the survival of monarchs. Without it, they cannot complete their life cycle and their populations decline.

Indeed, eradication of milkweed both in agricultural areas as well as in urban and suburban landscapes is one of the primary reasons that monarchs are in trouble today.

Plant Milkweed

The good news is that planting milkweed is one of the easiest ways that each of us can make a difference for monarchs. There are several dozen species of this wildflower native to North America, so no matter where you live, there is at least one milkweed species naturally found in your area.

Planting local milkweed species is always best. You can collect your own seed or purchase seed or plants to add to your garden, or any landscape in your community. Three species have particularly wide ranges and are good choices in most regions: common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), and butterflyweed (*A. tuberosa*). The latter two are highly ornamental and widely available



via the nursery trade.

Note: Tropical milkweed available at many retail nurseries is not native to the U.S. However it has naturalized in the Southeastern U.S. Science is discovering that its long bloom time may have some detrimental effects on monarch migration and possibly be a source to spread disease within monarch populations. If you do have tropical milkweed in your garden, it is recommended to cut the plant back in the winter months to encourage monarchs to move on to their natural overwintering sites.

Here are some resources to help you find the best milkweed for your area:



Planting the Right Milkweed in your Region

Twelve Native Milkweeds for Monarchs (blog)

Fact Sheet about Milkweed

Milkweed Native to Eastern U.S.

Milkweed Native to the Great Plains

Milkweed Native to Southeastern U.S.

Milkweed seedling plugs

Monarch Watch Milkweed Market

Milkweed Seeds for Home, Schools and Community Groups

Botanical Interests Seed packets

Xerces Society

Kid's Wildlife Friends

Winter wildlife quiz answers

Question 1: If you guessed the Sea Otter, you're right! Its fur is denser than the fur of any other mammal. One square inch of Sea Otter fur contains as many as 1 million hairs -- that's about the same number of hairs on the heads of ten humans. This water-loving mammal eats, sleeps, mates, and gives birth at sea. It lacks the layer of blubber that keeps many other marine mammals warm, and so has only its fur coat to protect it from chilly North Pacific waters. Oil spills can devastate Sea Otter populations, because the otters' coats lose their insulating properties when saturated with oil, and many affected otters die of exposure.

Question 2: All of the above! A Grizzly Bear can put on as much as 400 pounds to prepare for its winter sleep. This omnivore will eat just about anything in its quest to fatten up for the lean times. Grizzlies eat not just large mammals (elk, moose, deer) and fish, they'll eat roots, plant sprouts, berries, mushrooms, and any smaller critters, including insects, that come their way.

Question 3: The answer is the Red Squirrel. These gregarious creatures are active year-round, although they may hibernate for a few days in inclement weather. The Red Squirrel's relatives the Eastern Chipmunk and White-tailed Prairie Dog are true hibernators, meaning they enter a state of dormancy during the winter in which body temperature drops to only a few degrees above air temperature, and all bodily processes greatly slow down. The hibernating animal thus conserves energy and stored fat, and is able to sleep through much of the winter.

Bears enter a protected area and sleep away the harshest part of the winter, but they do not truly hibernate, as their sleep is not deep, and their temperature falls only a few degrees below normal. Even Polar Bears retire to a den for part of the winter. Females den from November to March, during which time they give birth, while males usually den from late November to late January.

Question 4: The answer is the Grizzly Bear, which ranges in color from tawny to

dark brown but is never white (except in the case of a rare albino individual). Arctic Foxes and Least Weasels vary seasonally, growing a white coat for winter camouflage (in northern populations). The Gray Wolf is a species that varies individually, ranging from white to black and any shade in between. Most Eastern Gray Squirrels are gray, but there are populations of white gray squirrels in several areas, with the largest concentration found in Olney, Illinois. And rarest of all of these white mammals are the cream-colored Black Bears that live in the coastal rain forests of British Columbia. These bears belong to a subspecies of Black Bear officially named the Kermode Bear but often referred to as the Spirit Bear.

Question 5: If you guessed all of the above you are right! At least some individuals of all of these species relocate seasonally. Even though Manatees live only in the South, they head for warmer water in the winter, some migrating tens to hundreds of miles and others merely congregating around the heated discharge from power plants. The Caribou of Alaska and Canada famously go on long mass migrations between winter and summer grounds. The Bison of the Great Plains once undertook mass migrations by the millions and ranged nearly from coast to coast. Few of the populations left are free-ranging, but some Canadian Bison still migrate about 150 miles between winter and summer grounds.

The Snow Goose is named for its white color rather than its love of snow; it summers in the Arctic but heads to the coastal United States and southward for the winter. The Snowy Owl, on the other hand, can and does survive the winter in our most northerly climes. In some years, however, if the owl's prey species (mainly lemmings) decline in population, large numbers of Snowy Owls will move into regions south of their normal range; this kind of migration is called an irruption or invasion.

Question 6: The Polar Bear, with its warm coat to keep it warm, is the svelte member of this group, reaching only about 1,100 pounds.

A Grizzly Bear can weigh as much as 1,700 pounds. The largest Grizzlies are those of the southern Alaska coast and islands that are known as Alaskan Brown Bears. A Walrus can weigh nearly twice as much, topping out at 3,300 pounds. It lives in Arctic seas and needs a good solid layer of blubber to keep warm. Wisely, it spends a lot of time sunbathing on beaches or ice floes. When it does go on a prolonged dive (for up to 30 minutes) its blood flow decreases to the skin, thus conserving body heat, and increases to its vital internal organs.

The record holder among these four creatures is the Northern Elephant Seal: A male can reach 4,400 pounds! He doesn't stay that hefty, however: this seal can lose 50 percent of its weight during the mating season, when it is too busy to eat, and also fasts during the molt, when it grows a new coat. This Pacific Coast species does not live in waters as cold as the Walrus, but it spends more time in the water. It can stay underwater for nearly an hour and a half, pop up for a few minutes and dive again, so clearly it needs insulating blubber to help retain body heat.

Question 7: Lemmings are an important food source for the Arctic Fox. These small rodents undergo cyclical variations in population, increasing in number enormously when food is plentiful, then decreasing when the population outgrows the food supply. Arctic Fox populations follow these cycles, usually peaking a year after the lemmings. There is a similar relationship between the Lynx and the Snowshoe Hare, which makes up three-quarters of the Lynx's diet.

Northern River Otters mainly eat fish, and Minks fish too but their preferred prey in many areas is muskrat. Polar Bears stalk seals mainly, but also eat young Walruses, whales, fish, birds, eggs, shellfish, kelp ... whatever they can find. Walruses like clams and other mollusks so much that they can eat 3,000 to 6,000 in a single feeding. Northern Elephant Seals eat enormous quantities of squid (and they eat fish, too).

SPRING

Continued from Page 22

teams. Attend their games, wear the team colors, and donate oranges and water as refreshments.

17. Decorate planters, using pin-

wheels instead of flowers, for an instant garden—no watering necessary!

18. Organize a neighborhood stroller-wagon-bicycle parade on a Saturday morning. All wheels welcome!

19. Satisfy a sweet tooth. Make springtime sundaes with vanilla ice cream, pastel sprinkles, and lots of whipped cream.

20. Do your community a favor. Pick up trash in the park or join forces with your neighbors on spring clean-up day.

21. Celebrate spring as they do in other cultures. The Russians eat pancakes; the Swedes light bonfires; the Japanese picnic when the cherry blossoms bloom. You can, too!

Our public lands are classrooms that are too valuable to lose

By Nate Bailey

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Lessons from a youth hunt in the public lands around Oregon's Elliott State Forest have a major impact on father and son, but opportunities like this are at risk

The subtle click of the safety disengaging made my heart race. Every emotion, logical thought, and sense focused like a laser to the moment. To say I was a nervous wreck was an understatement.

Chase was a lot calmer than I was. He'd already passed on a shot that he said didn't feel right, but it was clear he'd made up his mind about this plump little forked horn buck standing across the cut, just east of the Elliott State Forest. As a dad, I prayed for a clean shot, as I have personally experienced the ramifications of a poor one and hoped Chase wouldn't have to go through that with his first youth tag. But I could almost taste the backstrap, too, so I struggled to keep my

cool.

I heard the crack of the .270 and watched the buck fall in its tracks. Emotions poured out of both of us, and a sacred bond had been made between father and son. Chase and I were now of the same make, the same tribe.

This story plays out for families across the U.S. every year. Young men and women learn lessons that only the realities of the outdoors can teach: Patience, perseverance, responsibility, success, and disappointment are what this lifestyle is all about. Such lessons can only be taught outdoors, but our classrooms—our public lands—are under the threat of being locked up (<http://sportsmensaccess.org/>).

There is a big push in the West for states to obtain the federal lands within their borders. On the surface, this might seem like a good idea, but state governments have a long track record of selling off land to meet budget shortfalls.

This issue is very personal to me here in Oregon, where the sale of the Elliott State

Forest has been playing out at the expense of taxpayers for years. That sale appears to be tabled for the moment, as our governor has asked to explore ways to keep the lands public, or at least to make a private sale more appealing to the public. But, at one point, there was a long list of buyers, topped by some private companies known for closing public hunting and fishing access. That's how state ownership goes.

Outdoorsmen—and our sons and daughters—stand to lose much more than access if our national public lands are handed over to the states, which have a mandate to make revenue off these lands. Our outdoor heritage depends on the wild places where it can be lived out.

As a volunteer TRCP Ambassador here in Oregon, I'm willing to fight to protect our heritage. If you'd like to join me in safeguarding our public lands, so kids like my son Chase can grow into confident, resilient, conservation-minded hunters, sign the petition at sportsmensaccess.org.

President Trump's attempted rollback of Clean Water rule is bad news for anglers and hunters

By Monte Burke

Forbes

With the stroke of a pen yesterday, President Donald Trump began the process of attempting to rollback what's become known as the Waters of the United States rule, which protects fish and wildlife and the quality of our nation's rivers, streams and wetlands.

Maybe it's sheer coincidence, but rescinding the Waters of the U.S. rule would also happen to help some of Trump's business interests.

The only good news for sportsmen and women: According to many experts, the process of rolling back this rule could take many years.

The Waters of the U.S. rule was passed in May of 2015. The rule clarified the federal government's role in protecting headwaters and wetlands under the Clean Water Act, and was widely greeted as big win for those who like to hunt and fish, and for fans of clean drinking water.

President Trump had a different take. "The EPA's regulators were putting people out of jobs by the hundreds of thousands, and regulations and permits started treating our wonderful small farmers and small business-

es as if they were a major industrial polluter," he said at yesterday's signing. "They treated them horribly. Horribly."

And he claimed that doing away with the rule would be a win-win: "We're going to free up our country, and it's going to be done in a very environmental and positive environmental way, I will tell you that, but create millions of jobs."

Sportsmen's groups disagreed with Trump's assessment. Trout Unlimited, the National Wildlife Federation, the American Fly Fishing Trade Association, the Izaak Walton League of America, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, in a joint statement, said that if the Waters of the U.S. rule is rescinded, 60 percent of U.S. streams and 20 million acres of wetlands would lose the protection of the Clean Water Act, a situation they described as "a tragedy for fish and wildlife, hunting and fishing, and clean water."

The groups point out that clean water and wetlands are the backbone of the \$50 billion-a-year sportfishing industry, which sustains 828,000 jobs, and that 83% of sportsmen and women were in favor of the 2015 rule.

Trump's relationship with sportsmen

and women has been muddled at best. He courted their vote in an interview with Field & Stream magazine last year, saying: "This is magnificent land. And we have to be great stewards of this land. And the hunters do such a great job—I mean, the hunters and the fishermen and all of the different people that use that land."

And the appointment of Ryan Zinke as the head of the Department of the Interior was supported by sportsmen's groups because the former Montana congressman appears to be against the selling off of public lands.

But none of this matters at all if our waters and wetlands are not protected.

And one wonders where Donald Trump, Jr., is in all of this. Trump, Jr.—an angler and hunter—fishes public water in New York State's Catskill Mountains area, precisely the type of water that could be adversely affected by the undoing of the Waters of the U.S. rule.

Trump, Jr., styled himself as the new administration's true champion of sportsmen and women. In an interview with Wide Open Spaces the day after the election, Trump, Jr.,

Continued on Page 25

Congress overreaches to roll back Americans' say in public land management

Lawmakers pursue obscure legislative process for blocking a rule created to give the public more say in management plans for 245 million acres of BLM public lands

By The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Sportsmen, landowners, and former Bureau of Land Management employees strongly criticized a move by senators and representatives to overturn the BLM's revised land-use planning rule, known as Planning 2.0. Using the obscure and rarely used Congressional Review Act, federal decision makers took a first step toward repealing the new rule and rolling back opportunities for the public to have more say in land management decisions.

In a statement, Senate co-sponsors of a Congressional Review Act resolution cite bad information as motivation to revoke the rule, namely that the final rule fails to prioritize feedback from all stakeholders, including local governments. However, if lawmakers are successful, the BLM would continue using outdated guidelines for land-use planning established in 1983, which keep the public in the dark until very late in the planning process.

"It has been publicly recognized by county commissioners and conservation districts that the BLM took meaningful steps between the draft and final planning rules to accommodate requests from local governments and the public in reworking land-use planning," says Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. "Now, Congress is taking steps to reduce agency transparency and limit the public's ability to have a say in how their public lands are managed. While a few concerns might remain, Congress is going about this the wrong way."

The Congressional Review Act is a little-known law that enables Congress to roll back regulations within 60 legislative days of their enactment. The BLM planning rule, while under development since 2014, was finalized in December 2016, so it falls within the window of eligibility for repeal by the CRA. The process has only been successful once.

"The Western Landowners Alliance supports the BLM's efforts in updating

planning to meet today's needs in the West," says Lesli Allison, executive director of the Western Landowners Alliance. "There are opportunities for improvement, but not to the detriment of eliminating all the good progress that has been made to date. We believe working through the Secretary of Interior is the best way to achieve our goals and constructively address any remaining concerns with the rule."

Most disturbingly, once a rule is overturned through the CRA, no new rule that is "substantially the same" can be developed.

"A Congressional Review Act repeal would eliminate Planning 2.0 and likely eliminate the BLM's authority to revise their planning regulations ever again in the future," says Jesse Juen, president of the Public Lands Foundation and a longtime BLM employee. "Instead of stripping the incoming Secretary of the Interior of his authority before he takes office, lawmakers should work with the new administration to make refinements to a planning process that many stakeholders championed."

Six reasons hunters should plant Red Oaks

Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation

April Whistle Call

1. EXTREMELY FAST JUVENILE GROWTH Red oaks will boost your ego with their fast growth, especially in the first few years of their life. This fast growth and resulting large canopy at a young age translates to them getting ahead of the competition, and heavy crops of acorns production when they are mature.

2. WIDE WINDOW OF ACORN PRODUCTION Most of the common white oak species drop their acorns over a narrow time frame in the early fall. Red oaks, on the other hand, begin their descent in the early fall and can drop acorns literally until early

spring the following year! So the reds can feed hungry wildlife when they need it most.

3. SITE PLASTIC Compared to the white oak group, Red oak species are not quite as picky about the site where they are planted. For example, that means you can get away with putting a river bottom dwelling pin oak or water oak further up the hill than they naturally occur, without any ill effects.

4. MORE RELIABLE ACORN CROPS Red oaks aren't known for having nearly as many "off years" with acorn production compared to white oaks. Heck, some white oaks may go several years without producing whereas the Reds seem to produce at least some acorns on bad years.

5. ACORNS LAST LONGER ON THE

GROUND Red oak acorns by design do not sprout a root until the following spring, so they remain viable for wildlife consumption for a much longer period of time compared to white oaks. Although high in tannin, winter rains slowly leach the tannins away, making them more palatable to game in the winter when they need it most.

6. FALL COLOR Not everyone grows oak trees solely for the wildlife benefits. Many of the red oaks have beautiful fall color. Examples of some of the red oaks that can show outstanding color displays in the fall are: Scarlet oak, Nuttall oak, Shumard oak, and most of the red oak hybrids.

Want to plant some Red Oak seedlings on your property?

WATER

Continued from Page 24

was asked why the outdoorsmen of America should support a Trump administration. His answer:

"We are going to make sure these things

are taken care of. The big joke at Christmas this year was that the only job in government that I would want is with the Department of Interior. I understand these issues. It's something I'm passionate about. I will be the very loud voice about these issues in my father's ear."

Perhaps Trump, Jr., hasn't been loud

enough.

Or perhaps, for the president and his son, their business concerns trump those for fishing and hunting and the environment. Bloomberg News reported today that the golf courses in the U.S. owned by the Trump Organization would benefit from the rollback of the Waters of the U.S. rule.

Kid's Wildlife Friends

How does the Wood Frog avoid freezing solid during a cold arctic winter?

By eNature

When winter arrives in the Arctic, the temperature drops, and the Wood Frog responds accordingly—in a behavior that sounds like something from a science fiction movie.

It lets itself get deep-frozen.

A Living Ice Cube?

First the frog drifts into a deep sleep, then its heart stops, its breathing stops, and most of the water in its body turns to ice. The Wood Frog becomes, for all intents and purposes, a frog-shaped Popsicle.

But when spring arrives some months later, an interesting thing happens: the frog thaws, and its hearts starts to pump again, its breathing resumes, and the animal is soon hopping, croaking, mating—enjoying all the

amphibian pleasures life has to offer.

So what's the Wood Frog's secret? Letting yourself get frozen solid doesn't seem a good way to cope with winter!

It's Not Easy Being Frozen

Well, slow cooling is important. If the animal's temperature were to drop too quickly, it wouldn't have time to secrete substances like glucose that protect its internal organs from dehydration while frozen. Slow cooling also allows the water inside the frog time to shift position. The more water that collects in the hollow cavities within the abdomen, for example, the more room there is for the water to expand as it freezes. If too much water remains in the organs, however, blood vessels will rupture as the temperature drops, and the animal will never wake from its slumber.



Wood Frog © MichaelZahniser

So when you start to see the tadpoles, frogs and other amphibians in your neighborhood this spring, don't forget their northern kin and their remarkable story.

How are the creatures in your neck of the woods handling winter's cold?

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to benefit Lesser Prairie-chickens

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has awarded a grant to the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) to restore lesser prairie-chicken habitat. The \$197,309.25 grant is funded through NFWF's ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation and Innovation Program.

"We appreciate our partnership with NFWF and ConocoPhillips and look forward to applying these funds as we continue to implement the Lesser Prairie-chicken Rangewide Plan," said Alexa Sandoval, Director of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and Chairman of the Lesser Prairie-chicken Initiative Council. "Restoration work is key to the long-term survival of the bird and this grant will contribute to the combined efforts to keep the bird off the endangered species list."

The bird was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2014,

but was de-listed in 2016 after a federal judge ruled on a lawsuit and vacated the listing. The judge ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did not thoroughly consider active conservation efforts in making the listing decision, namely the activities associated with WAFWA's Lesser Prairie-chicken Rangewide Plan. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently reviewing the status of the lesser prairie-chicken across its five-state range to determine whether it should be listed again.

The NFWF grant will fund restoration work on up to 1,000 acres of private land that will connect larger fragmented pieces of prairie-chicken habitat. Good habitat must be contiguous to benefit lesser prairie-chickens.

"The rangewide plan calls for us to focus our efforts as strategically as possible," said Bill Van Pelt, WAFWA Grassland Coordinator. "By connecting

good bird habitat, more acreage will be available for the birds to thrive."

The rangewide plan is a collaborative effort of WAFWA and the state wildlife agencies of Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. It was developed to ensure conservation of the lesser prairie-chicken by providing a mechanism for voluntary cooperation by landowners and industry, and improving coordination between state and federal conservation agencies. Funding for WAFWA's conservation efforts comes from voluntary mitigation payments by industry partners that are enrolled in the plan, along with grants from partners like NFWF. The plan allows agriculture producers and industry to continue operations while reducing impacts to the bird and its grassland habitat.

For more info on NFWF's ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation and Innovation Program, visit www.nfwf.org/spirit/Pages/home.aspx

Behind the obscure law republicans are using to gut environmental protections

Republicans in Congress are using the Congressional Review Act, a rarely-used law, to rip away protections for public lands

By Sarah Emerson
Motherboard

An obscure law, known as the Congressional Review Act (CRA), could set environmental protections back decades. This scorched-earth tool is unrivaled in its ability to quash new federal regulations, and prevent similar ones from being created in their stead. Now, emboldened by the Trump administration, Republicans in Congress are invoking it to lay waste to public lands.

The CRA has rarely been used, but two fossil fuel regulations have already been wiped clean from the slate—a financial transparency rule for oil, gas, and mineral extractors, and a rule that protected streams from mining waste runoff. Some environmentalists worry that we haven't seen the end of it.

"Republicans see it as a tool to win, and win quickly. It's the 'nuclear option' as far as these things are concerned," Matt Keller, senior director of conservation at The Wilderness Society, told me.

The law was among a suite of bills written by former Representative Newt Gingrich that formed the Contract with America Advancement Act. Signed by President Clinton, it legally manifested Republicans' desire to shrink executive power and limit government influence over individual states. So its resurgent popularity among Republicans today, who are openly hostile to what they've called "unconstitutional" federal oversight, was foreseeable, but no less concerning.

Under the CRA, Congress has 60 legislative or session days to disapprove of a new rule made by an agency or president. If Congress adjourns before that time period has expired, the CRA mechanism resets, and the next Congress is given a fresh start to submit its own joint resolution of disapproval. The rough cutoff for rules currently subject to the CRA is May 30, 2016. More than 100 Obama-era rules are up for deliberation.

Once a resolution is passed by both chambers of Congress, it becomes the president's responsibility to either sign or veto. CRA resolutions can be approved with just a simple majority, and

aren't subject to filibuster.

President Trump, who repealed the Securities and Exchange Commission's fossil fuel transparency rule this month, said at the time: "This is one of many that we've signed, and we have many more left. And we're bringing back jobs big league, we're bringing them back at the plant level; we're bringing them back at the mine level. The energy jobs are coming back."

What makes the CRA even more nerve-racking than executive orders or a repeal is that it prevents rules that are "substantially the same" from being introduced as replacement measures. Still, the exact definition of this caveat is vague enough to make some legal experts to wonder how lawmakers will interpret it.

"It's never been defined, and it's never been litigated. An agency could promulgate a new rule in the same space, but presumably this would be challenged, and a court could decide what 'substantially the same' means," Kate Konschnik, director of Harvard Law School's Environmental Policy Initiative, told me.

Since the CRA was enacted in 1996, it's been used just a hundred times or so. Only once, until recently, had it ever succeeded in overturning a rule. Under President George W. Bush in 2001, an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ergonomics regulation from the Clinton administration was effectively rolled back. After it was removed, the agency never attempted to issue another rule to regulate in the same space.

So far, the Department of the Interior (DOI), which oversees the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has been one of Congress' primary targets. These agencies are responsible for safeguarding public lands—some 500 million acres, or a fifth of all land in the United States—along with the natural resources that lie beneath them.

Two important public lands bills hang in the balance, and will be revisited once Congress is back from its recess. One of them requires oil and gas companies who drill on public lands to reuse wasted

methane, and return the royalties to taxpayers. The other, called "Planning 2.0," is a measure that would give Americans greater voice and authority in deciding how public lands are used.

The Methane Waste and Prevention Rule was finalized last November with broad public support. Approximately 80 percent of registered voters in western states wanted drilling companies to reduce methane emissions on public lands, according to a 2016 poll by Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project. Nearly \$330 million worth of natural gas is wasted each year due to venting or leaks from drilling operations.

"Republicans are trying to use an archaic and blunt weapon to undo a measure that is preventing the waste of hundreds of millions of dollars of natural gas every year," Senator Tom Udall (D-NM), who has opposed Republicans' use of the CRA to undo the methane rule, told me.

"The BLM rule is a common-sense measure to stop waste that was recommended by the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office, and that President Obama's experts spent two years developing with industry, stakeholders, and folks in my state. But Republicans want to use an obscure law to erase all of that work, and all of these protections."

Meanwhile, the BLM's Planning 2.0 rule is also expected to be rolled back next month. As Motherboard previously reported, the regulation took years in the making, and because of that, was supported by Republican and Democratic constituents alike. Its opposers have given no logical reason to strike down the rule, other than to weaken federal influence over states.

Last year, however, Republicans in Congress received a total of \$25,456,544 in campaign funding from oil and gas interests, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Fossil fuel giants like ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron spend millions each year in lobbying efforts. At a Senate Commerce Committee hearing this month, Jack Gerard, resident and CEO of the American Petroleum Institute—largest trade association for the oil

Continued on Page 28

Ducks nesting in your backyard?

After the courtship flights and mating rituals are complete, the end result of course is nesting hens. Every apartment complex pond, golf course, park and even some swimming pools can become targeted nesting areas for hens looking to raise ducklings. Ducks and geese have been known to think outside the box when it comes to finding a safe place for a nest, while others seem to not be thinking at all.

Soon, people all over the country will begin finding nesting birds. Knowing what to do, and most importantly what not to do, with and around the nest is very important.

There are many laws and treaties that protect migratory birds. It is ILLEGAL to take or possess eggs of nesting migratory birds without the proper permits!

Things to know about a mallard nest

The nest bowl is 7-8 inches in diameter and 1-2 inches deep.

Once the nest is built, egg laying will begin from 1-3 days.

Nest cover can be any form of vegetation available within the area. Preferably dense vegetation 24 inches high, such as

native grasslands and CRP fields.

The hen will lay an average of 9 eggs which will hatch within 28 days once incubation begins.

What to do when you've found a nest on your property?

DU conservation biologists highly recommend that you leave the nest undisturbed and try to avoid walking in its area.

Too many ducks and geese on your property? Contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism at 620-672-5911.

Problems with nesting Canada Geese?

Stories will soon begin to spread about the goose that chased the jogger through the local park, or tried to attack someone who was trying to hit a golf shot. A Canada goose can be very hostile toward anything that approaches its nest. Learning how to recognize nests, how long they will be on the nest, and how to avoid provoking nesting geese will help you steer clear of goose/human conflicts this spring.

Identifying a nest

Canada geese have a diverse approach toward nesting. They will nest almost any-

where; bushes, fairways, cliffs, muskrat houses and small islands.

Canada geese exhibit very strong family and pair bonds, and tend to return to their natal homes to nest.

Artificial structures such as tires, wash-tubs, and boat docks will attract a goose searching for a nest.

Generally, the goose will sit on the nest and the gander will stand guard nearby.

They will lay a range of 4-8 eggs per clutch and the eggs will hatch within 25-30 days.

Canada geese will renest if a nest is destroyed.

What to do if you find a nest on your property?

Again, it is highly recommended that you leave the nest undisturbed and try to avoid walking in its area.

Having problems with resident Canada geese on your property?

Most state agencies provide information on controlling nuisance Canada geese.

Too many geese on your property?

Contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism at 620-672-5911.

South Dakota men charged with baiting mountain lions

By Associated Press

Two men in western South Dakota have been charged with illegally baiting mountain lions with deer carcasses.

Mason Hamm, 20, and William Colson VI, 38, both of Rapid City, are facing eight misdemeanor charges after allegedly placing several road-killed deer in Spring Creek Canyon, in southwestern Rapid City, to lure mountain lions.

According to a statement from South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks, the men placed five dead deer in the canyon near Colson's house over the course of several weeks between December 2015 and January 2016. By the end of January, Hamm had killed a mountain lion and officers matched its DNA to blood found near the pile of deer.

The men have been charged with conspiracy to unlawfully possess big-game

animal, aiding and abetting prohibited hunting and six counts of aiding and abetting unlawful possession of big-game animal. Each misdemeanor charge has a maximum penalty of a year in the county jail, a fine of \$2,000 or both.

The Rapid City Journal reported (<http://bit.ly/2mbznLW>) that law enforcement started watching the canyon after finding a gutted buck that looked like it was being used as mountain lion bait.

CONGRESS

Continued from Page 27

and gas industry—was invited to testify against the methane rule about its alleged harm to local jobs.

“It takes a while to go through the public process—the Methane Waste and Prevention Rule process was started 2011. Some people don't have the patience, but that's how you do things right

and set up future generations. The idea that we should be wiping these things out with little debate is where we see the real harm,” said Josh Mantell, an energy policy expert at The Wilderness Society.

The fate of public lands protections is uncertain in almost every way. Here at Motherboard, we've extensively covered the various avenues Republicans are using to dismantle rules that not only protect the environment and wildlife, but human health as well. With Scott Pruitt leading the Environmental Protection

Agency, and Ryan Zinke expected to be confirmed as Interior Secretary, Congress is well-positioned to make lasting changes to policies as we know them.

“As we've seen in a lot of spaces, there's a lot of energy and a lot of desire to fight,” Mantell said of public lands rules currently under threat. “This isn't the way that most Americans see things going. There's some fright but there's an understanding that now we need to fight.”

Kansas Wildlife Federation
P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282

The Kansas Wildlife Federation is Working to Preserve a Way of Life for Kansas!

Conservation of the state's natural resources means . . .

- Public awareness of our state's wonderfully diverse advantages and a determination to keep and improve them for wise use now and in future years.
- Proper safeguards—within the bounds of wise use—for the state's soil, water, forests and wildlife, to assure proper balance, use and advancement of our state's entire economy!

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- * **Youth Membership:** As a Youth member (for ages 8-17 as of January 1), your \$10 dues provide you with 6 electronic issues of the KWF newsletter, a personalized KWF Youth membership card and access to KWF Youth social media site (no voting privileges regarding regular membership matters).
- * **Basic Membership:** As a Basic member, for \$30 you'll receive 6 issues of the KWF newsletter packed with the latest information on wildlife resources, events and issues around the state. You also have voting privileges at the KWF Annual Meeting.
- * **Expanded Membership:** When you send in your Expanded member dues of \$75, you receive the basic membership benefits and a complimentary ticket to the KWF Annual Meeting and CAP banquet.
- * **Kansan:** For an annual fee of \$150, you receive all the benefits listed above plus an additional complimentary ticket to the KWF Annual Meeting and CAP banquet.

Here's How to Join:

Complete the form on Page 17 and mail with your membership fee to:
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