

Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society's Efforts to Inform Conservation Policy

Chad Bishop*, Wildlife Biology, University of Montana, Missoula

Sonja Andersen, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Lewistown

Lance McNew, Department of Animal and Range Sciences, Montana State University, Bozeman

*Indicates Presenter

**Indicates Student Presentation

The Conservation Affairs Committee (CAC) of Montana TWS works to: 1) review and comment on conservation-related legislative proposals and regulations, 2) prepare white papers, 3) coordinate/review proposed position statements from MT TWS membership, and 4) interface with TWS Governmental Affairs leadership. Montana TWS frequently contracts with a conservation partner during Montana legislative sessions to assist the Chapter with legislative bill tracking, review and comment. During 2024, we (MT TWS CAC and Executive Board) worked collaboratively with TWS and western US chapters/sections to review and comment on: 1) BLM's Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development and 2) BLM's Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and EIS for Greater Sage-Grouse Range-wide Planning. We additionally advanced Montana-specific policy priorities to TWS as they constructed a list of policy priorities that were subsequently sent to all TWS member units for input/ranking. We then facilitated a process for Montana Chapter members to provide input on TWS Policy Priorities to inform national policy strategy. During 2025, we have been tracking draft bills during the Montana legislative session and providing comments in coordination with conservation partners. At time of this writing, we opposed a bill to set hunting seasons in statute and supported a bill expanding legal protections for wildlife relative to the unlawful use of aircraft for hunting. We welcome your involvement as we strengthen Montana TWS policy efforts.