

A Message from the NC Chapter of The Wildlife Society:

Since the 2012 announcement that Raleigh was selected to host the 23rd Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society (TWS), members of the North Carolina Chapter of TWS (NCTWS) have looked forward to welcoming our colleagues to the premier wildlife science and networking event of 2016. Over the past 16 months, scores of NCTWS members have been planning and organizing a top-notch conference. Hosting this gathering of wildlife professionals and students has been a galvanizing focus of chapter work that we've approached with energy and excitement.

Over the past few weeks, the passage of the [Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act](#) (also referred to as House Bill 2, or HB2) has cast an unfortunate shadow over North Carolina and has caused several states and municipalities to prohibit non-essential travel to North Carolina, which includes the TWS conference. In addition, TWS members have expressed concern about traveling to North Carolina and are withdrawing from attending the conference. As the state chapter hosting this conference, we feel it's our responsibility to respond, as we want our guests to feel welcome to our state.

TWS has a long record of support for fairness and equality and equal protection under the law, which is articulated quite clearly in the TWS standing position statement on [Workforce Diversity in the Wildlife Profession](#). That statement talks at length about inclusiveness, engagement, and enfranchisement of all citizens, including a diversity of culture, spiritual views, and sexual orientation, and is fundamental to our concept of what TWS stands for.

Our chapter fully supports the TWS position on Workforce Diversity, and will continue to work hard to assure a welcoming and supportive conference environment for all attendees. We've looked forward to sharing our state's natural heritage and southern hospitality, and HB2 will not change our chapter's efforts to show that true southern hospitality is welcoming and inclusive to all people, including our LGBTQ attendees.

In addition, we would like to provide a few excerpted quotes from statements published after the legislative action from the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Mayor of Raleigh.

“Respect for diversity and inclusion remains a constant for our staff and area hospitality partners as well as for our valued visitors. Raleigh, N.C., is a diverse community shaped by a culture of respect and inclusiveness for all of its citizens and visitors...” from the [Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau](#).

“Raleigh is a welcoming, diverse city that draws its strength from many areas. We have always been a place where people respect each other's differences and understand that those differences make us stronger. Raleigh

will always be open to everyone. Everyone. We will continue to support all of our businesses, citizens and visitors with the utmost respect, regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability..." from [Mayor Nancy McFarlane](#).

We have worked diligently to anticipate the needs of attendees, secure sponsors, and cultivate an atmosphere that fosters a focus on learning and sharing wildlife science and management. While it is possible that HB2's outcomes will be changed prior to the conference, NCTWS shares these perspectives and observations noting our own inclusivity, appreciation for diversity, intolerance for discrimination, and the good news that our host city and the [Raleigh Convention Center](#) are steadfast in their commitment to welcoming and supporting all people with dignity and respect.

We hope you will join us in Raleigh for the 2016 TWS Conference October 15-19, 2016. Together we will make this conference great!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Marcus". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Jeff Marcus  
Acting President  
North Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society  
Statement approved by NCTWS board on 5/11/2016