

VITALE, Jenny

From: SOLTERMAN, Susan
Sent: Monday, November 26, 2007 4:10 PM
To: SOLTERMAN, Susan
Subject: Audubon MN News Nov 26 '07

**Audubon Minnesota's 2008 State Legislative Priorities**

A BIG thank you to all the Audubon activists that participated in this year's legislative issue selection process and who attended Audubon's annual Fall Members Meeting on Saturday, November 10th at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Members discussed, debated and finally prioritized three additional legislative issues for the 2007 state legislative session. We had excellent speakers, participants, discussion and debate. We had a great meeting with lots of good discussion and debate and a strong reaffirmation that Audubon activists in Minnesota have a commitment to advocacy and the opinions to back it up.

This year, the Audubon Minnesota board agreed to automatically forward to this year's agenda, two issues that have been on Audubon's priority list for the last six years: dedicated funding and off-highway vehicles. In the end, members recommended to the Board that Audubon focus on the following five issues:

Forest Legacy Easements Bonding - \$30 million

The Minnesota Forest Legacy Program protects environmentally important forests that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses. The state uses federal funds and local matching funds to purchase development rights and conservation easements in targeted forests to keep them intact. The landowner retains ownership and can continue to foster forest uses such as timber management, recreation, hunting, and hiking as long as they don't conflict with the terms of the easement. All easements are perpetual and any new owner is bound by the terms of the easement.

Native Prairie Conservation and Protection Bonding - \$10 million

Prairie Bank easements protect native Minnesota prairies that have never been plowed and are at risk of being destroyed. Native prairies are Minnesota's most endangered ecological community and represent an important part of our state's natural heritage.

Reinvest in Minnesota/Clean Energy (Grassland Biomass) Bonding - \$46 million

This is a program was established, without funding, last session. The RIM-CE program is a working lands bio-energy program focusing grassland biomass production. Farmers would get incremental incentives based on the public and wildlife benefits achieved from their energy crop production practices. Farmers and the biomass production will be coupled with existing heat and power facilities. The Department of Natural Resources and the Board of Water and Soil Resources will administer the program with technical advice from stakeholders. Sustainable grassland biomass growth offers the opportunity to establish thousands of additional acres of ground-nesting bird habitat.

Dedicate Funding for the Environment

Last session, this bill made it out of conference committee and in the very last hours of legislative session, the State House ran out of time to pass it off the house floor for its final vote. General fund expenditures as a percentage of total spending are at there lowest point in 30 years. Total general fund spending is down 47 percent since 2001 and several stand-alone conservation accounts have been raided for non-conservation spending. Conservation scientists have documented strong downward trends in wildlife populations, habitat, recreation acres per person, and water quality. Efforts over the past 6 years have made dedicated funding a top-tier legislative issue. Long-term, substantial, dedicated funding is needed for conservation including efforts to benefit bird habitat and wildlife, parks and trails, and lakes and rivers, wetlands and more.

Protect Minnesota's Natural Resources from Off-Highway Vehicle Damage

As in past sessions, we anticipate our work to be a combination of offense and defense in order to protect Minnesota's natural resources from OHV damage. The agenda will most likely include the following aspects: establishing a uniform trail policy of closed unless posted open; protecting the North Shore State Trail from ATV use; protecting the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest from OHV trails. State Forests provide habitat for many of Minnesota's birds, and many of these state-owned areas are a part of the Important Bird Area program. Excessive trails and renegade trails create habitat fragmentation for birds and other wildlife.

Thank you the following Audubon members who attended the meeting: Linda Amrein, Gordon Anderson, Bart Anderson, Lou Asher, Gary Botzek, Bill Bruins, Susan Chapin, Kathy Doyle, Joel Dunnette, John and Mark Feight, Ernest Gunderson, Greg Juenemann, Brian Jungels, Ed Lehr, Buck McDonald, Peter Mattson, Dan McGuiness, Jennifer McNichol, Jerry Medley, Rick and Joan Meierotto, Jill Mithun, Gwen and Mason Myers, Richard Newmark, Brenda Olson, Linda Peck, Trudi Poquette, John Rust,

Bonnie Sample, Peg Schwendeman, Julian Sellers, Marcia and Burt Sundquist, Pat and Jack Telfer, Bob Titzler, Steve Weston and Bob Williams.

Special thanks to Jenny Vitale, Karen Eckman, Jerry Bahls, Gene and Nancy Larimore, Mark Martell, Jenny Vitale, Lois Norrgard and Mark Peterson for volunteering their skills and times to organize the event. A very special, special thank you to Ginny Black who made sure that all of our recyclable and biodegradable garbage was properly composted, leaving us, in the end, with a very small bag of refuse.

Our excellent speakers included Dr. Lee Frelich, J. Drake Hamilton, Justin Fay, Don Arnosti, Matt Norton, Karen Orenstein and David Hartwell.

Birders Changing Minnesota's Outdoor Image by Ron Way from [MinnPost](#)

This was once the icon image of Minnesota outdoors: a couple gun-totin' guys showing their quarry of pheasants or a grinning hunter posing with a 10-point whitetail. That's changed, in a big way.

In Minnesota and Wisconsin, the number who watch and feed wildlife has surpassed those who hunt. What's more, the "birders" outspend the shooters, and the trend shows more and more of us will bag wildlife with a camera than with a shotgun.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey shows that in 2006 nearly half (48 percent) of Minnesotans said they were wildlife watchers while 13 percent said they were hunters. Wildlife watchers spent \$654.5 million pursuing their sport last year, while hunters spent \$475.8 million.

While fishing is enjoyed by 28 percent of Minnesotans (tying Alaska as the highest participation rate in the nation), the 1.4 million anglers spend an amazing \$2.5 billion on their sport.

Minnesotans are more active in outdoor wildlife activities than residents in any other state in the nation. But the survey, conducted every five years, also showed that hunter percentages are down and wildlife watching rates are up in Minnesota. While fishing remains popular in Minnesota, nationally there was a 12 percent decline in the fishing participation between 2001 and 2006 and hunting was down 4 percent over the same period. However, wildlife watching increased by 8 percent, reversing a downward trend from the previous five-year period. In Wisconsin, the survey said 27 percent identified with hunting and fishing while 39 percent with wildlife watching.

But while the face of outdoors activities in Minnesota is changing to "non-consumptive" uses, embedded in the number are some other trends.

Overall, outdoor recreation has suffered a decline of 11 to 25 percent (depending on the activity) over the last 10 years, something that has brought unwanted results. For example, a 2006 survey by the United Health Foundation found that while Minnesotans are generally healthier than the rest of the country, obesity was up 132 percent.

At least hunting gets folks out and hike — wildlife watching more often than not is confined to backyard

viewing involving little physical activity.

For another example, the rate of off-road vehicle recreation continues to spiral upward, doubling every five years, according to an outdoor planning report by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The rise in ATV use presents challenges for trail and wildlife habitat maintenance along with increased tensions between users.

The change in outdoor activity also affects revenue for outdoors programs. Declining license fees and excise taxes on equipment like guns, ammo and fishing tackle helps protect the very lands that provide habitat for wildlife that some want to shoot but others want to watch.

The instability of outdoor funding in Minnesota has led to a push to constitutionally dedicate a portion of the sales tax for natural resources and the arts, something that nearly passed earlier this year and is expected to be considered again by the 2008 Legislature.

Interesting reports on the changing nature of outdoor activities in Minnesota can be found at the [DNR website](#). Check out "[Ten-year forecasts of Minnesota adult outdoor recreation participation, 2005 to 2014](#)" and a draft released last month, "[State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#)."

Global Warming Legislation Advances in Senate – Call Klobuchar, Coleman and your Congressional Rep

If you attended Audubon's Midwest Regional Conference in October and heard National Audubon Society's president, John Flicker speak, you are probably wondering where we stand on federal global warming legislation.

Let's start with the "cap and trade" legislation that will induce the electricity industry to auction or trade their carbon credits when they reduce their carbon emissions. In early November, a subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Public Works approved a bipartisan cap-and-trade bill aimed at reducing global warming emissions. The bill, generally referred to as the "Lieberman-Warner bill" (Senators Joe Lieberman (I-CT) and John Warner (R-VA)) passed the subcommittee by a narrow 4-3 vote. The bill is not as strong as Audubon and other organizations had hoped. [Click here to read](#) the letter National Audubon Society sent to Senators Lieberman and Warner and our statement about the bill.

However, the bill does include significant funding to protect birds and other wildlife. Audubon fully supports this provision and will be working to make sure that these funding options are kept in the bill, while working to strengthen other provisions. The full committee is currently holding hearings to evaluate the bill before a legislative markup on December 5th.

The other very immediate concern is the Energy Bill. Congressional leaders have pledged to finish the conference committee negotiations on this bill before the end of year. Audubon strongly supports a final energy bill that contains the following two provisions: A nationwide renewable electricity standard (RES) that would require 15% of our electricity to come from clean sources—

such as wind, solar, and biomass—by 2020, while allowing for a percentage of the requirement to come from energy efficiency improvements (currently in the House bill) and a vehicle fuel efficiency standard to require vehicle mileage to meet a 35 mpg minimum by 2020 (in the Senate bill). We also support strong, clear and sustainable biofuel provisions.

As these bills move forward, we need ALL AUDUBON MEMBERS ON BOARD to make 3 phone calls! Please deliver the following message to both Senators Coleman and Klobuchar and your Congressional member –

"Thank you for all you've done so far, but we need strong Minnesota leadership on both the Leiberman/Warner Cap and Trade Bill (make it stronger) and an Energy Bill that contains both Renewable Electricity and Vehicle Fuel Efficiency Standards!"

Senator Amy Klobuchar: 202-224-3244

Senator Norm Coleman: 202-224-5641

Congressman Tim Walz: 202-225-2472

Congressman Jim Kline: 202-225-2271

Congresswoman Betty McCollum: 202-225-6631

Congressman Jim Ramstad: 202-225-2871

Congressman Keith Ellison: 202-225-4755

Congresswoman Michelle Bachmann: 202-225-2331

Congressman Collin Peterson: 202-225-2165

Congressman Jim Oberstar: 202-225-6211

Audubon Minnesota spearheads the Breeding Bird Atlas and gets \$280,000 in LCCMR Funding!

Audubon Minnesota's Breeding Bird Atlas proposal before the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources was approved in late October. Audubon's proposal was one of thirty-six proposals for projects to maintain and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources. The LCCMR will recommend to the 2008 Legislature a combined \$22.866 million funding package from the Trust Fund. The commission narrowed their choices from an initial pool of over \$98 million in project requests.

Minnesota will soon join forty-five other states that have breeding bird atlases. Minnesota is the only state in the Midwest that does not have an inventory of breeding birds and consequently is impeding regional conservation efforts. The atlas will provide essential distribution information for many areas in which we currently have little data. Audubon, in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota DNR Division of Ecological Resources, the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum and Natural Resources Research Institute, is developing a comprehensive, statewide survey of the breeding distribution of all species of birds in Minnesota. All involved organizations are providing financial and other support along with expertise and guidance.

The breeding bird atlas will be both a book and an interactive on-line version, both with detailed bird distribution maps, data on breeding status, and a summary of data from other surveys. Full access to the information will be provided to the public as well as conservation agencies and organizations. This will be an extensive survey of the state's breeding birds and will identify areas of high bird diversity and density, and thus guide habitat protection, restoration, and management efforts. An estimated 1,500 volunteers will be needed to collect data on the distribution and abundance of birds. As sentinels for Minnesota's environmental quality, the state's breeding birds are a window into our goal to provide sustainable resources for future generations. The atlas will be an invaluable tool in helping us monitor our ability to achieve that goal.

Major Audubon Victory for Ecosystem Restoration Projects; Congress Overrides Presidential Veto

On November 8, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), a bill five years in the making, containing billions of dollars to restore ecosystems, became law after Congress, for the first time, overrode President Bush's veto by a staggering margin. This bill, a longtime Audubon priority, allocates \$6 of its \$23 billion for ecosystem restoration in the Everglades, the Great Lakes, coastal Louisiana, and the Mississippi River. Audubon activists from around country aggressively lobbied in favor of the bill.

This is the first veto override of the Bush presidency. This law authorizes funding for the projects but Congress still needs to appropriate the funds during the Fiscal Year 2009 budget cycle. Thank you for contacting your Members of Congress about this bill! The U.S. Congress voted today to override the president's veto of the Water Resources Development Act, a \$23 billion piece of legislation that authorizes more than \$5.5 billion for key ecosystem restoration projects. The president issued his veto on Nov. 2, citing the bill's cost. This marks the first time Congress has overridden a veto and only the 106th time in history. To learn more about the bill, [click here!](#)

National Wildlife Refuge Association's 3rd Annual Photo Contest

The National Wildlife Refuge Association's third annual digital photo contest, showcasing America's Refuge System, is calling for entries which can be submitted until 15 December 2007. Results will be announced in March 2008 in connection with the 105th anniversary of the establishment of the first

national wildlife refuge. Images submitted for the photo contest may be of birds, mammals, insects, fish, and other animals, as well as plants, people, or simply shots of scenery. The images must be from taken on Refuge System property.

This year, Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. has donated the grand prize: a 2008 Toyota Highlander Hybrid. Other prizes include a class at the Art Wolfe Digital Photography Center, a Canon EOS 40D Camera, Steiner 8x42 Peregrine Binoculars, a TrekPod, and offerings from Barbara's Bakery, Wild Bird Centers of America, and Houghton Mifflin.

At least 200 images will be selected for inclusion in the NWRA Refuge Image Library, and every photographer submitting an entry will receive a one-year membership in the National Wildlife Refuge Association! [For more details, visit the Refuge Photo Contest website.](#)

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Audubon Mission: Working with others to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats,

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