



photo by Jim Williams – Collonade Building Peregrine Chicks

Audubon Minnesota

News

June 11, 2007

Audubon Minnesota's 2007 State Legislative Priorities Summary

Dedicated Funding: For the last 9 years, Audubon Minnesota has seen the imperative to convince lawmakers to prioritize funding to protect our great outdoors and Minnesota's way-of-life. 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.

We started out the 2007 legislative session hoping for ½ of a cent increase of the current sales tax to be dedicated to natural resource protection in Minnesota. Audubon's work on Important Bird Areas and other conservation and policy efforts is pointless if land conservation programs, from lack of funding, cannot implement necessary habitat protection measures. Our state's projected population growth will result in the development of more than one million acres in the next 25 years. Development pressure is placing Minnesota's natural areas and farmland in jeopardy. Compounding this problem is the lack of funding to address it. At stake is bird habitat. Downward population trends exist for birds and other wildlife. Also suffering are habitat quantity and quality (where are all the ducks?); loss of recreation acres per person, and water quality degradation.

The dedicated funding bill, authored by Senator Pogemiller (DFL- Minneapolis) and Representative Sertich (DFL-Chisolm), called for a constitutional amendment to dedicate funds from the state's sales tax to be used for the outdoors and the arts. The final bill added 3/8 of one percent to the state's sales tax, generating about \$300 million a year. Of that:

- 33 percent would go to an outdoor heritage fund,
- 33 percent to a clean-water fund,
- 14.75 percent to a parks and trails fund,
- 19.25 percent to an arts and cultural heritage fund

The bill made it out of conference committee in the last hours of the final day legislative session, but did not make it to the House floor for its final vote. Some legislative leadership have indicated that the bill will be taken-up the first week (February 12) of the 2008 legislative session for final passage.

Motorized Recreation: Bird habitat and the wilderness character of our state forests have been damaged and destroyed by motorized recreation. Each year, Audubon members prioritize the need for improved management of motorized vehicles on public lands. The goals include protecting sensitive wetlands; preventing further fragmentation with user-created trails; preventing soil erosion and impacts on water quality; maintain quiet opportunities for forest users and ultimately, minimize the disturbance and destruction of precious bird habitat.

The 2007 legislative session objectives included:

- establish a uniform motorized trail policy across the state
- restrict mudder trucks trails to limited public land use
- protect the North Shore State Trail as summer hiking trail
- maintain Wildlife Management Areas as non-motorized
- channel monies for rider education to environmental organizations

The result:

- Mudder trucks are prohibited in state forests located in Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard Counties. Also listed in the bill was Beltrami County, until one county commissioner had it removed, resulting in [a Bemidji Pioneer editorial](#).
- The North Shore State Trail continues to be all-terrain vehicle free, but the Willard Munger Trail came under scrutiny in the final days of session when language was added to an omnibus bill reducing local involvement in trail plan developments.
- Environmental organizations, as well as ATV clubs, can apply for DNR funding (\$225,000 per year) to provide safety, trail monitoring, environmental education to riders.
- Motorized rider will have maps at each state forest that tells them where they can and cannot ride, thanks to Senator Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley), the new chair to the Senate Environment and Natural Resources. Chaudhary independently decided the solution to the reckless motorized-use rested upon rider access to maps.
- Unfortunately, the measure proves pointless since Chaudhary also negotiated to give riders carte blanche riding on ALL trails, mapped or not, in state forests north of Hwy. 2, making his mapping initiative meaningless in the forests most under siege by motorized recreation.

Great Lakes Compact: Minnesota became the first state in the region to endorse the Great Lakes Compact. Once approved by each of the eight Great Lakes states and Congress, the Compact will provide uniform protection for new or expanding water usage within the basin.

National Audubon Society Develops Global Warming Goals

Curbing the devastating effects of global warming is the most urgent challenge of our time. Scientists project that if human activities continue to produce harmful heat-trapping gases - like carbon dioxide - in "business as usual" amounts, the earth will experience higher sea levels, extreme weather conditions, massive species extinction, and large-scale disease increases.

We're already seeing the impacts, but to avoid the worst effects of global warming, the United States will need to reduce its emissions by about 2 percent each year to reach a goal of about 60-80 percent reductions by mid-century.

This country has access to the technology needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Individual states are already taking steps to adopt mandatory caps on emissions, renewable electricity standards, and higher vehicle efficiency standards. What we now need is the political will - at the federal level - to set reductions in motion.

Comprehensive Global Warming Bills

Legislation that will put the U.S. on the right path to reducing emissions has been introduced in both the House and Senate. The *Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007 (S 309)*, introduced by Senators Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) and Barbara Boxer (D-California), will gradually bring emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and to at least 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Its companion bill in the House is the *Safe Climate Act of 2007 (HR 1590)*, authored by Representative Henry Waxman (D-California). These reductions will be achieved through a series of emission caps combined with clean technologies, higher efficiencies, and renewable electricity standards.

Renewable Electricity Standards

A renewable electricity standard (RES) is a market-based mechanism that requires utility companies to gradually increase the portion of electricity produced from renewable resources such as wind and solar energy, or to purchase credits from other participating utilities. Twenty-one states have already passed their own RES. [Minnesota has the toughest RES at 25 percent reduction by 2025 - see here for the Governor's state initiative.](#) The *Federal Renewable Energy Portfolio Act of 2007 (HR 969)*, introduced by Representatives Tom Udall (D-New Mexico), Todd Platts (R-Pennsylvania), Mark Udall (D-Colorado), and Frank Pallone (D-New Jersey), will require electric utilities to acquire 20 percent of their electricity from wind, solar and other renewable energy sources by 2020.

Vehicle Fuel Efficiency

Improving vehicle fuel efficiency standards is a critical component in combating global warming. Representative Edward Markey (D-Massachusetts) and Platts have introduced the *Fuel Economy Reform Act (HR 1506)*. This legislation establishes two goals to reach by 2018: all new vehicle fleets to average 35 miles per gallon by and mandates automakers must improve fuel economy by 4 percent each year.

We still have time to turn around the climate crisis if we adopt strong policies to immediately reduce global warming pollution. Keep the above information as talking points when you contact your U.S. senators and representatives ([click here to find out who they are](#)). We need to urge them to co-sponsor these bills and to thank them when they provide leadership on global warming legislation. Watch for alerts like the one described below to act immediately on opportunities to influence the debate in Washington D.C. on global warming.

For additional talking points, check out the Star Tribune's two editorials on global warming: [Editorial: Time for U.S. to act on global warming](#) and [Editorial: The arrogance lies in seeing warming as OK](#).

Global Warming Stories Sought: What You Are Doing to Help Fight Global Warming

National Audubon Society is looking for global warming impact stories from the Audubon family. Tell us what steps you are taking - both individual actions and chapter or other group initiatives. We will share your experiences through their e-newsletter and on the Audubon website - inspiring others to join Audubon in making a difference.

Please send your story to kconnors@audubon.org - with photos showcasing what you are doing, if you have them!

Contact Senators Klobuchar and Coleman in Support National Renewable Energy Standards

The debate on U.S. energy policy is expected to hit the floor of the Senate **this week** and we need to make sure that this legislation promotes the use of clean and renewable energy.

Audubon supports ending our dependence on old, dirty energy sources like coal and moving to clean, renewable sources - this means we need a national renewable electricity standard of 20% by 2020.

Here's what a nationwide 20 percent renewable electricity standard by 2020 would do for the country:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to taking 71 million cars off our roads
- Create 355,000 jobs
- Save consumers about \$49 billion on electricity and natural gas bills

Establishing a nationwide renewable electricity standard is one of the biggest steps we can take to reduce global warming pollution; and we *have the technology to do this right now*. In fact, twenty-three states already have renewable electricity standards, and several other states are considering similar measures. A renewable electricity standard requires utility companies to generate a certain percentage of electricity from clean, renewable sources like wind, solar, ocean, geothermal, and biomass.

It's time for Congress to take action and make sure we have a nationwide standard that will curb global warming, boost the economy, and help secure a renewable energy future.

[Click here to email your Senators now and ask them to put America's enormous renewable energy potential into action!](#)

Please thank Senator Klobuchar for her "carbon counter" bill, which requires large industries to provide accurate data on their carbon emission levels to the federal government.

Message from State Representative Ann Lenczewski (D-Bloomington): Help Her Save the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge! Audubon Volunteers Needed at the Rally on Saturday, July 14th

As you may know, I have been the chief author of legislation to replace the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge for a number of years. I am proud to have achieved the initial funding at the legislature to begin the process of replacing the bridge for bikers, birders, hikers and wildlife refuge users and I want to thank everyone who has worked with me on this project. I am now asking you to join me in attempting to reach our shared goal of the final funding piece for all Minnesotans who care about the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge.

I am pleased to announce that I am hosting a rally at the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge **on Saturday, July 14th**, at noon on the Bloomington side of the Minnesota River at the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge. Please join me and the Minnesota House Capital Investment Committee on site that day. These Minnesota House legislators are the key decision makers who will recommend whether the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge receives the remainder of the necessary funding that we know it needs. We need a great turnout so legislators understand the importance on this bridge.

Over the years I have worked hard with many of you and many organizations to help this project become a reality. I have been enjoying the bridge and the beauty of the location since I was a little girl and I know how much it means to so many of us.

I am looking for volunteers to help that day, help plan the event or to help get the word out. Please send an email to rep.ann.lenczewski@house.mn if you would like to help or if you can attend. Also, I encourage you to send this email to any one you believe would like to join us that day and ask them to send me an email as well.

Again, thank you for all you have done. I am confident that together we will make the opening of the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge a reality. I look forward to working with you again soon.

Sincerely,
Ann Lenczewski
State Representative - Bloomington
Minnesota House Tax Chair
rep.ann.lenczewski@house.mn

Thank You to State Representative Phyllis Kahn (D-Minneapolis) for her “Lights Out” Resolution

Representative Phyllis Kahn, the author of legislation requiring low-watt bulbs in public light fixtures, acknowledged the need to protect migratory birds in the spring and fall by authoring a House Resolution addressing the issue. Kahn and Speaker Margaret Kelliher (D-Minneapolis) signed the resolution on May 10th on the House floor with Mark Peterson, Audubon Minnesota's Executive Director. Thank you, Representative Kahn .

In addition, the Governor issued a proclamation recognizing the second Saturday in May as Bird Conservation Day in Minnesota!

***Essential Birdwatching* class with Bruce Fall and Peter Moe on Tuesday, June 19, 8 am to 3 pm**
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Chaska

Spend a day at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum with expert ornithologist Bruce Fall watching and listening to the beautiful songbirds that make the summer season even more wondrous. Learn how to create a songbird-friendly landscape at home with plants that will offer year-round pleasure.

Bruce Fall is associate education specialist in the biology program at the University of Minnesota. Peter Moe is the director of operations at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. He has been responsible for the planning and management of the Arboretum's plant collections, gardens, and restored native landscapes for more than 30 years.

This course is offered as part of Curiosity Camp, a program of one-day summer getaways for adults. The session cost is \$125; discounts are available for members of the University of Minnesota Alumni Association or Circle of Scholars. For more information or to register, please visit www.cce.umn.edu/curiosity or call 612-624-4000. If you'd like to learn more about the Curiosity Camp, which is a program of the College of Continuing Education at the University of Minnesota, please visit www.cce.umn.edu.

Bell Museum's June Events

Bike-In at the Bell

Saturday, June 16, noon–midnight

Bell Museum courtyard

\$8, \$5 if you ride your bike

The third annual Bike-In at the Bell brings together bicycle enthusiasts, transportation advocates, environmental groups, artists, and community leaders for a celebration of people-powered transportation. Part community education fair, part family picnic, Bike-In at the Bell is a chance for adults and children to learn about how their transportation choices can positively impact their environment and community. Learn about local bike organizations and bike friendly businesses; find out how to navigate bike trails across the state; play fun, bike-themed carnival games; and decorate your bike for an art bike parade. These games, activities, and workshops will be followed by an evening program that will include a bike fashion show and an outdoor film screening. For a complete program visit bellmuseum.org.

Schaefer Prairie with Ed Cushing

Sunday, June 24, 1–4 p.m.

\$15, \$10 members, register by June 18

Schaefer Prairie is one of the last and best examples of the tallgrass prairie that once covered millions of acres of Minnesota. Its many habitats are home to a particularly rich and varied community of native species. Professor Ed Cushing, the trip leader, is renowned for his ecological research and is one of the University's most popular professors for his skill and enthusiasm at helping others understand nature.

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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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