



Audubon Minnesota News May 3, 2007

Dedicated Funding Inching Towards the Finish Line

In late March, Senator Pogemiller (DFL-Minneapolis) offered a delete-everything amendment to his dedicated funding bill ([Senate File 6](#)) changing the breakdown of the appropriations for the 3/8ths of a cent increase in revenue. The new formula, which raises about \$313 million, is different than the House companion bill's and looks like this:

- 33% for the heritage enhancement fund to preserve, enhance or protect the state fish, wildlife, habitat and land resources (\$100 million/yr)
- 43% for the great outdoors in Minnesota fund to protect and restore the state's lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater, parks, trails, natural areas and historic sites(\$137 million/yr)
- 24% for cultural legacy fund to invest in arts, arts education and art access grants (\$76 million/yr)

Despite, or perhaps in spite, of this new and improved version, the Senate Taxes Committee voted 7-5 against the bill on April 24th. The bill can still be called up by the committee chair, Senator Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) if he chooses to reconsider the vote. However, during committee discussion, Senator Bakk indicated that he doesn't support dedicating a portion of the budget in the constitution.

On the same day as the Senate took their vote, Representative Tony Sertich's (DFL-Chisolm) dedicated funding bill ([House File 2285](#)) had a public hearing in the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division, a subcommittee of the House's Environment Finance Committee. The subcommittee passed the bill with a party-line vote, including its chair, Senator David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake), who happens to reside in Senator Bakk's district and one Republican - Representative Denny McNamara (R- Hastings). The bill now needs to be heard by the full Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee.

You may recall from last month's Audubon news, that the House bill raises about \$290 million. The revenue distribution is:

- 25% goes to natural heritage fund and may be spent only on fish, habitat and other natural resources (\$72.34 million)
- 25% goes to clean water fund and spent only on lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater (\$72.34 million)
- 15% goes to parks and trails fund and spent only on parks and trails (\$43.41 million)
- 15% goes to sustainable drinking water fund to protect drinking water sources (\$43.41 million)
- 10% goes to arts and cultural heritage fund (\$28.94 million)
- 10% of remaining money gets divided between the funds (\$28.94 million)

In the meantime, Governor Pawlenty's 15 member "Conservation Legacy Commission", charged with recommending reforms in conservation funding, just released a report recommending that the legislature increase natural resource funding by allowing the public to approve a constitutional amendment on dedicated a portion of the sales tax. To read a recent Star Tribune article about the report [click here](#).

Off-Highway Vehicles and Disappearing Forest Wilderness

The saga continues. With the legislature on the fast track to get all budget bills to the Governor ASAP, legislators also thought wise to include the environmental policy issues in the environmental finance, just to be especially efficient. The environmental finance (and policy) conference committee has been meeting nearly every day since last Thursday. The word is that the bill is in good shape and might even avoid a veto.

Unfortunately, this session did not turn-out to be our golden moment for improving conservation in Minnesota's state forests. We started out the session asking for the following:

- uniform statewide management policy for motorized recreation in all forests – meaning all trails are "closed unless posted open"
- fifty percent of each state forest should be closed to motorized recreation and preserved for traditional, quiet sports like hunting and hiking
- mudder trucks need their own challenge parks; they do not belong in state forests

Here's what we're getting:

- mudder trucks are prohibited in state forests located in Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard counties
- each state forest will have a trailhead map of designated motorized trails

- the DNR OHV dedicated accounts will provide grants to organizations to promote conservation-minded OHV riding

Hot Off the Press! The North Shore Birding Trail Guide is Ready.

Audubon Minnesota is pleased to announce the publication of The North Shore Birding Trail: A Guide to Birding Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior from Duluth to Grand Portage.

Traveling on Highway 61 between Duluth and Grand Portage this guide will take you along 150 miles of rugged cliffs, wide vistas of Lake Superior and beautiful state parks with spectacular water falls and hiking trails. Maps and detailed descriptions highlight the location and bird species you'll find at each site and at what time of year. Guides are available at many bookstores and [Adventure Publications](#). This book was made possible by a grant from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources. Proceeds from the guide will be used to fund future editions.

2007 Ramsey County Bird Festival Where Birds and People Meet - May 3 through May 6, 2007

The second annual Ramsey County Bird Festival is a free celebration of springtime birds, starting May 3 through May 6, 2007. This volunteer-run festival highlights the many interesting birds found in St. Paul and suburbs and is designed to attract families and others to birdwatching. On Friday evening, a spaghetti dinner will feature nationally known bird expert and author Laura Erickson, speaking on "Backyard Birds--Hooooo Gives a Hoot?" Archimedes, an Eastern Screech-Owl, will be along for the fun as Erickson discusses the birds that make our own backyards so interesting, and what we can do to more easily see and enjoy them. Also on the festival's schedule is a day full of displays, demonstrations and hikes at Snail Lake Regional Park, a birding adventure by canoe, and a tour of the rarely open Arden Hills Army Training Site (formerly known as the Twin Cities Arsenal). [Click here for more information and registration details!](#)

Friends and Northeastern Minnesotans Offer Vandalism Reward

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness and Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness (NMW) have each offered a \$1000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of vandals who have recently caused nearly \$10,000 worth of damage to public property on the Superior National Forest. The dollars are in addition to the \$1000 reward the U.S. Forest Service is currently offering for information.

Hardest hit were information signs and bulletin boards describing recreational opportunities on the Superior and its Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The vandalism included gunshot damage to signs and bulletin boards, complete destruction of others and outright theft of some. Vandalism is nothing new on the Superior, Forest Service officials report, but this year damage hit new levels. Some property was hit more than once—vandalized, repaired or replaced, then vandalized again. Permit boxes near wilderness entry points were a special target, though not the only one, of the damage which seems to have occurred during the winter months.

Anyone who has information regarding these crimes can report it to law enforcement agencies or call the Forest Service at 218-365-7609.

Volunteers Needed! The Living Green Expo is this Weekend

Although Audubon Minnesota will not have a table at this year's Green Expo, we are a member of the Upper Midwest Population and Environment Coalition, which *will* have a table. This coalition of organizations provides outreach and education to the public on issues related to growing population, its effect on the environment and the solutions that will conserve natural resources and increase quality of life.

The expo, located in the Grand Stand building on State Fair grounds, is 10am to 5pm both Saturday and Sunday, May 5 and 6. The expo will host more than 100 workshops on subjects like rooftop gardening, bicycle touring and commuting, solar heating, wind energy, fair trade, green building, gardening, heirloom and low-impact gardening and more! For more information on the Green Expo and additional workshops, [click here!](#)

If you are interested in volunteering at the Expo for the Upper Midwest Population and Environment table, please contact Ryan Herst, Field Organizer for Population Connection at 763-742-7681.

The Birding Boat – Harriet Island to Fort Snelling – 9 am, Wednesday, May 9th

Cruise the heavily-wooded Great River National Park right in St. Paul on May 9th with a team of expert ornithologists from the U.S. Park Service and Audubon Minnesota for a special bird watching experience. Depart from Harriet Island Regional Park in downtown St. Paul at 9 am for the two hour birding cruise. Each passenger will receive a special birding guide.

Go to the [Padelford Packet Boat Co for information on registration.](#)

2007 International Migratory Bird Day - “Birds in a Changing Climate” Saturday, May 12

Audubon members know that birds have long been indicators of environmental change. Birds are an indicator species and sound the alarm about pesticide impacts, water pollution and the loss of contiguous forestland. The reactions of birds to weather have long been noted. Farmers have used the arrivals of migratory birds to make decisions about planting crops for hundreds of years. Changes in the migration patterns of some birds species has lent credibility to the concern that the Earth's atmosphere is warming. Today, as the rate of warming increases, scientists are exploring how climate change will affect birds and how we can reduce our impact. [Click here to learn more about International Migratory Bird Day.](#)

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at the 6th Annual Great River Birding and Nature Festival

Guided Birding Hikes for both beginners and advanced birders will take you along the river shoreline, to bluff land, grasslands, bottom lands, Mississippi River backwaters and the Weaver Dunes Nature Conservancy, in search of migrating warblers, raptors, and waterfowl, as well as, area fauna and flora. There will be special Evening Hikes to explore nocturnal animal sounds.

Additional field trips, with small fees, will be offered all three days to explore the waterways and include: Birding by Motor Boat, by Mini-Railroad Cars, and Birding by Kayak or Canoe on the Mississippi backwaters and sloughs.

The Great River Birding and Nature Festival is proudly endorsed by Audubon as a unique educational experience to connect people with nature. The registration deadline for reserved events is May 5. [Click here for more information.](#)

Save The Date: The Audubon Upper Midwest Regional Conference to Take Place October 12-14, 2007

From October 12-14, the Audubon Upper Midwest Regional Conference will be taking place at the Embassy Suites in Bloomington, MN. Highlights will include sessions in three critical habitat tracks - grassland, forest and wetlands - as well as talks by scientist and author Bridget Stutchbury entitled "Migratory songbirds: canaries in the mine?," and by National Audubon Society President John Flicker.

On October 12, pre-conference attendees will explore "The Mississippi River: America's Flyway." The day will be full of informative and interactive sessions on Mississippi River habitat issues and opportunities and a sternwheeler boat ride on the Mississippi River IBA.

Conference hosts include Audubon Minnesota, The Upper Mississippi River Initiative, Bird Conservation Minnesota, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter, and St. Paul Audubon Society. For further information on sponsorship and exhibit space, contact Audubon Minnesota at 651-739-9332. Conference details will be available on the [Audubon Minnesota website](#). Registration materials will be available after June 1.

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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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