



# Audubon Minnesota eNews

## January 31, 2008

photo by Laura Erickson

### Update on Audubon Minnesota's Bonding Priority Projects

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On January 14<sup>th</sup>, Governor Pawlenty released his 2008 Capital Budget (Bonding) Recommendations to the legislature. Listed below are Audubon Minnesota's bonding priorities with a description of how much the Governor appropriated in his bonding package. In it, the Governor recommends \$225 million of capital investments for 600 local bridges across the state that may need repair or replacement. Interestingly, local government asked for only a third of that. With another \$30 million for local roads, \$55 million an I-35W expansion and \$70 million to advance the Central Corridor light rail project – nearly \$400 million of the Governor's \$1.09 billion bonding bill is dedicated to transportation. With that, other programs, like the ones Audubon strongly supports, got shaved.

#### Forest Legacy Easements Bonding – *Audubon: \$30 million; Governor: \$9 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 - *Audubon: \$10 million; Governor: \$3 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 – *Audubon: \$46 million; Governor: \$3 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 for ground-nesting bird habitat.

#### Great River Park Bonding – *Audubon: \$6 million; Governor: \$0*

The City of St. Paul is requesting funds several projects along the Mississippi River that would help restore habitat and provide additional environmental education and interpretation opportunities along 26 miles of shoreline. This riverfront is within the boundaries of Audubon's

36,000 acre Twin Cities/Mississippi River Important Bird Area. Projects include funding for the Lilydale Park which includes a fossil area, lake, wetlands and wooded areas; and funds for an interpretive center at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, located in the heart of St. Paul, preserving Indian mounds and historic meeting place for the Dakota before the invasion.

Bell Museum – Audubon: \$24 million; Governor: \$0

The Bell Museum's new building project is included in University's 2008 bonding request to the Minnesota Legislature. The Bell Museum is a key public venue for environmental issues and a forum for people who care about the natural world. The museum has raised \$9 million in private donations so far. The bonding dollars contribute to the construction of a new building that will serve more visitors by increasing the current number of visitors from 40,000 to 120,000 annually.

However, there is hope! The legislature will be meeting and negotiating throughout February and March on an alternative bonding package. During those discussions, it would be great for YOUR LEGISLATOR to know that you support the bonding for the following programs.

Here's what you can do:

- watch for e-mail action alerts that make it easy for you to send a quick e-mail to your legislator asking for decent environmental bonding dollars this year;
- write to your local newspaper indicating that the legislature and the governor need to do a better job providing bonding dollars for natural resource programs;
- go to Lobby Day;
- attend a constituent meeting with your legislator (see below)!

## **Come to Audubon's First Metro-Area Global Warming Symposium Climate Change in Minnesota: What Next?**

**9 am to Noon, Saturday, March 1**

**Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church, 2020 W. Lake of the Isles Pkwy., Minneapolis**

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Join Audubon members and friends for an informative morning learning how prairie carbon sequestration and cap and trade in the electric industry can help reduce greenhouse gases. With global climate change already showing profound effects on our planet and its wildlife, here's your opportunity to discuss what we can do here in Minnesota about our warming world. The summit is free and open to the public. *Sponsored by Audubon Minnesota and St. Paul Audubon.*

9 am Coffee and scones

9:30 Audubon Welcoming Remarks

10 am Sven Sundgaard, KARE-TV meteorologist and producer of the station's Strictly Science

10:30 Barbara Freese, consultant, Union of Concerned Scientists; author, *Coal: A Human History*

11:15 Clarence Lehman, researcher, University of Minnesota's Cedar Creek Natural History Area

## **Are you Ready for Lobby Day?**

### **Rolling Thunder Lobby Days at the Capitol!**

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Many Audubon members have been asking "When is Lobby Day?" Until recently, I wasn't sure! For the last 6 years, Audubon Minnesota has joined forces with the Minnesota Environmental Partnership

and other member organizations in coordinating one very big and powerful environmental LOBBY DAY. It's fun and it's exciting.

This year we are trying something different. Instead of hosting just one Citizens' Day at the Capitol, we decided to host six. We're calling it "Rolling Thunder Days at the Capitol." By focusing on regions of the state, we will provide a more in-depth experience for participants and member groups. This is the one occasion of the year where we all come together, with our members and grassroots leaders, to make sure our state legislators know that Minnesotans value our lakes, rivers, streams, forests and our great outdoors!

In addition, the constant rumble of constituents at the Capitol talking about our issues during the first half of the legislative session will surely impress our elected leaders! We need you to make sure Minnesotans are heard and Minnesota's future is protected for all to enjoy. To learn more about Audubon Minnesota's 2008 state legislative priorities, [go to http://mn.audubon.org](http://mn.audubon.org)

#### **Which day is your LOBBY DAY?**

Thursday, March 6 <sup>th</sup>	Southeastern Minnesota Day at the Capitol
Tuesday, March 11 <sup>th</sup>	Metro Area Day at the Capitol
Thursday, March 13 <sup>th</sup>	Northeastern Minnesota Day at the Capitol
Tuesday, March 18 <sup>th</sup>	Western Minnesota Day at the Capitol
Thursday, March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Southern Minnesota Day at the Capitol
Thursday, March 27 <sup>th</sup>	Northwestern Minnesota Day at the Capitol

Although the agenda will vary by region, the Lobby Day schedule will begin in the morning with an overview of the MEP collaborative agenda, a brief training and role play on how to lobby your legislator, and a policy and lobby question and answer period. We'll break for lunch (bring or buy your own), then we'll tour of the Capitol and attend afternoon legislative appointments.

#### **Important Notes on Lobby Days:**

- The Minnesota Environmental Partnership will provide transportation from each region to St. Paul and back.
- To sign-up for your Lobby Day, contact Patience Caso - 651-290-0154 or [PatienceCaso@MEPartnership.org](mailto:PatienceCaso@MEPartnership.org)
- PLEASE IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS AN AUDUBON MEMBER AND COPY ME ON YOUR E-MAIL: [ssolterman@audubon.org](mailto:ssolterman@audubon.org) – I will mail you a packet of information (if time permits) and meet you at the Capitol on your lobby day!

### **Bemidji Pioneer Commentary: Close Headwaters State Forest to ATVs by Dan McGuinness, Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative Policy Director Published Sunday, January 20, 2008**

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For the last 10 years I traveled by boats of various kinds along much of this great river, including a most memorable canoe trip in 2001 with several local guides on that magnificent stretch from Lake Itasca to the Bemidji waterfront.

Within that stretch the river runs through the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest. Here the river alternately flows between boreal forests and vast wetlands. It is home and habitat for trumpeter swans, red-shouldered hawks, bald eagles and waterfowl of many species. It is a reach of the river where one can hike along the banks or canoe its waters in a setting and get a sense of how the river must have been when it was first traveled by our ancestors.

The Minnesota DNR recently released a draft management plan for the Headwaters State Forest that would allow motorized recreation across and near the river. Audubon believes that this state forest and its narrow sensitive riparian habitat along the headwaters of the Mississippi River, and the river itself, is not the right place for all-terrain vehicles. Motorized damage of this part of the river has already caused extensive damage and must be stopped. The Mississippi Headwaters State Forest should be closed not "limited" for motorized vehicles.

Here are some points to consider:

-- Three of the five DNR work team members recommended the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest be closed to all motorized recreation, citing the natural assets above and noting that steep hills and sandy soils make the area vulnerable to off-road driving. Significant erosion has already been caused by illegal driving near and through the river. Mike Carroll, DNR regional director in Bemidji, acknowledged making the final decision to classify the forest as open for motorized use.

-- Currently, motorized damage in Mississippi Headwaters State Forest is extreme. Campgrounds are rutted and damaged, such as Coffee Pot Landing and Pine Point. All-terrain vehicles are riding in the river in a number of locations, such as Stumphges Rapids 3.

-- Rather than sealing off the historic sites noted above, the DNR draft plan has designated motorized routes in these sensitive areas, thereby rewarding illegal behavior by legalizing it.

-- The Mississippi Headwaters Board designated Mississippi Headwaters State Forest as "wild," which created a 1,000-foot corridor along the river where all motorized recreation is banned. DNR's draft plan disregards this protection and proposes motorized trails within this corridor, with some dead-ending at the river. As noted, illegal riding has already damaged the riparian zone.

-- By closing the forest to motorized recreation, all-terrain vehicles would still be able to ride through the forest in county road ditches and on township roads.

-- It will be difficult for DNR enforcement to strictly monitor any portion of this area because this part of the Mississippi is so remote. Classifying the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest as closed to motorized recreation would greatly aid in protecting the river itself.

-- In the interest of all Americans, we must protect this last remaining stretch of wild Mississippi for future citizens. The Mississippi Headwaters State Forest is a narrow corridor. It contains the most pristine stretch of the Mississippi River in Minnesota. Minnesotans must set a precedent of good stewardship for this internationally recognized river and migratory flyway.

For 10 years Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative has been working with local communities to find ways to protect and restore habitat all along the more than 2,350 miles of this river. We need you to add your voices to the call to protect the habitat and the health of the headwaters where it all begins.

*(side note: Audubon Minnesota attended and testified at the January 16<sup>th</sup> DNR hearing on the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest reclassification in Bemidji. Following that, Audubon submitted comments to DNR iterating many of the point Dan made above and more. A special thank you to Jerry and Shirley Maertens for organizing local citizen participation!)*

## **University of Minnesota Bell Museum of Natural History – Paradise Lost: Climate Change in the North Woods**

**7-9 pm, Saturday, February 16 Opening Day (Exhibition lasts until April 11)**

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Climate change is leaving its mark on every environment and ecosystem in the world. But what are the specific challenges facing our northern climate? In May 2006, a group of scientists and artists from the University of Wisconsin, Madison joined forces to investigate the ways in which a warmer climate could significantly alter our unique northern ecosystem. This exhibition explores the roots of climate change, the distinct beauty and functionality of northern climates, and what actions we can take—both individually and collectively—to preserve the environment we call home.

On opening day, attend a presentation by Paradise Lost exhibit collaborators from the University of Wisconsin, Madison: Dolly Ledin, Center for Biology Education and David Mladenoff, Forest Landscape Ecology Lab. The event will also feature exhibit artists Mary Burns (fiber) and John Bates (poet) of Manitowish, Wisconsin, and musician Frank Montano of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The program begins at 7 p.m., followed by light refreshments, music, and an opportunity to speak with the artists and scientists. For advance tickets, call 612-624-9050.

## **Grants available from St. Paul Audubon Society – Deadline: March 15**

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If you've got an idea for a project to benefit birds and/or their habitats, now is the time to apply to St. Paul Audubon for funding. The St. Paul chapter of the Audubon Society has \$15,000 for bird-related projects in 2008, and you needn't be a member to apply.

Last year St. Paul Audubon awarded grants to purchase binoculars for the Minnesota River Valley Wildlife Refuge's educational program, build new raptor enclosures at the Audubon Center of the North Woods in Sandstone, analyze habitat in a Como Park woodland, remove invasive species and develop educational materials for visitors to Lower Phalen Creek, and continue restoration work at Pine Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area.

Grants range from \$500 to \$3,000. Deadline for applying is March 15, 2008, and there's an easy form to fill out on-line. For more information and to apply, to <http://www.saintpaulaudubon.net/Grants.html>