



photo by Laura Erickson

Audubon Minnesota News

June 5, 2008

Call Senator Coleman and Klobuchar! Big Debate on Global Warming Right Now and Your Help is Needed! Capitol Switchboard - 202-224-3121

The Senate is debating one of the most important bills of this Congress RIGHT NOW. They will be voting on critical legislation to combat the global warming crisis as early as this Friday. Republicans are attempting a filibuster and if we do not get the 60 votes, the bill is effectively dead until further notice.

What do you say to Coleman's and Klobuchar's staff?

- Ask the Senators to vote to end the filibuster and move the debate forward on the Climate Security Act. Ask Senator Klobuchar and Senator Coleman to vote for the Climate Security Act!

Your action now will ensure that Congress does the right thing and takes bold steps to solve global warming!

What's Bottom-Line for Audubon's 2008 State Legislative Priorities?

Folks, at last November's Fall Members Meeting, we whittled down our most important state legislative issues to five high priorities (see below). Three of these issues were bonding proposals. As many of you know, the Governor took out his red pen and cut \$208 million dollars from the Legislature's \$925 million bonding investment bill. During the final days of the legislative session, the Legislature passed a second bonding bill that primarily funding Central Corridor, the Vermillion State Park and also – Cedar Avenue Bridge!

Here's a summary of our top priorities and others issues important to Audubon members.

Forest Legacy bonding for easements protects environmentally important forests that are threatened by development. Contiguous tracts of forest land are good bird habitat. The state uses federal funds and local matching funds to purchase development rights and perpetual conservation easements in targeted forests to keep them intact. Audubon: \$30 million. Legislature and Governor: \$3 million.

Native prairie conservation and protection bonding for easements allows landowners to protect native Minnesota prairies that have never been plowed. Native prairies are Minnesota's most endangered ecological community and represent an important part of our state's natural heritage. Audubon: \$10 million. Legislature and Governor: \$4 million

Reinvest in Minnesota/Clean Energy bonding would have helped farmers switch marginal land from corn fields to diverse native grassland for bio-fuel production. Farmers would have gotten incremental incentives for their effort. Ethanol from grassland biomass uses less water and energy to produce and the fields create additional habitat for grassland birds. *Legislative leadership was not ready to appropriate so much money to a relatively cutting-edge initiative. Instead, they beefed-up the regular Reinvest in Minnesota program, sending additional dollars to wetland protection.* Audubon: \$46 million. Legislature and Governor: \$0

Long-term, dedicated funding for the environment has been needed for conservation including efforts to benefit bird habitat and wildlife, parks and trails, and lakes and rivers, wetlands and more. Without a reliable steady source of funding, the chance to protect land for our grandchildren will pass. The Legislature passed a constitutional amendment this session and it will be on the ballot as a referendum question in November, 2008. Voters will be asked to increase the state sales tax 3/8 of 1 percent to fund habitat conservation; clean water initiatives; parks and trails; and arts and cultural heritage initiatives.

The "**Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council**" was created to advise the Legislature on how best to utilize the increased habitat funding that would result from passage of the amendment. The council will consist of four state lawmakers and eight citizens to advise the Legislature on how to spend money from the outdoor heritage fund which will receive more than \$90 million per year. The council will also accept applications for the Conservation Partner Program, which will allow private organizations to apply for matching funds for grants, should the constitutional amendment be adopted.

Off-Highway vehicle damage needs to be minimized on public lands. This will happen once the Minnesota establishes a uniform trail policy of "closed unless posted open." State forests provide habitat for many of Minnesota's birds, excessive trails and renegade trails create habitat fragmentation for birds and other wildlife. Audubon, along with several other environmental organizations, helped draft [H.F. No. 4028](#), introduced by Representative Larry Howes. This bill improves enforcement measures for managing renegade off-highway drivers.

Audubon Minnesota's Breeding Bird Atlas and the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota

Resources appropriates 40 percent of the state's lottery proceeds to environmental initiatives via the Environmental Trust Fund. This session the Legislature appropriated \$23 million and Audubon Minnesota got \$270,000 for our Breeding Bird Atlas!

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, Audubon Minnesota 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. When done, the atlas will be available in book form, and information contained in it will be available on the web.

Other Important Bonding Projects	Audubon	Legislature	Governor
Cedar Avenue Bridge	\$2 million	\$2 million	\$2 million in the Legislature's second bonding bill
Great River Park Bonding	\$6 million	\$2 million	vetoed
Springbrook Nature Center	\$2.2 million	\$2.5 million	vetoed
Bell Museum	\$24 million	\$24 million	vetoed
Scientific and Natural Areas	\$5 million	\$1 million	\$1 million
Metro Greenways	\$5 million	\$0	\$0

Lake Vermillion State Park got \$20 million in bonding dollars in the Legislature's second bonding bill. The money will for a land purchase from U.S. Steele for a new 3000 acre state park.

Green Solutions Act - Cap and Trade creates of a framework to move toward enactment of a "cap and trade" program that places a limit (cap) on total greenhouse gas emissions and permits those emitting the gases to purchase and trade allowances to one another. The legislation builds upon the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals that were enacted last year: 15 percent below 2005 emission levels by 2015; 30 percent by 2025, and at least 80 percent by 2050.

The Legislative Energy Commission is a new commission that will evaluate Minnesota's energy policies and the degree to which they promote environmentally and economically sustainable options and monitor the state's progress toward meeting its renewable energy goals. Plus, the commissioners of Commerce and the Pollution Control Agency will regularly report to the Legislature on the progress being made toward meeting those goals and propose any legislation they deem appropriate to achieve those reductions.

A Wind Energy Program will facilitate the development of small-scale wind energy projects.

The moratorium on the construction of **nuclear power plants** was not repealed.

The Clean Car Act, modeled after California's emission standards, was not adopted for Minnesota vehicles. This legislation would have allowed Minnesota to join 14 other states in adopting strong automobile emissions standards, giving Minnesota cleaner air and significant savings at the fuel pump.

Peak Oil Resolution memorializing the Governor to direct state agencies to assess the challenges presented by "Peak Oil" was vetoed by the Governor. "Peak Oil" refers to the point in time when the maximum rate of global oil production is reached, after which the rate of production irreversibly declines, creating problems of scarcity and higher prices. The assessment would inventory state

activities, their oil resource requirements, and the impact "Peak Oil" would have on each of those activities.

Influential Director of Audubon's Upper Mississippi River Initiative is Retiring

By Dennis Lien, as published in the Pioneer Press (05/31/2008)

With his ruddy face and thick beard, Dan McGuinness looks every bit the "river rat" he is. But his standing goes far beyond that.

Just talk to people who have had much to do with protecting the Upper Mississippi and St. Croix rivers the past couple of decades. They'll tell you that, whether it's in a public hearing room, along a riverbank or atop a johnboat, McGuinness usually can be found near the action, almost certainly making things go more smoothly.

"I would guess it would be hard to find a man who took on more issues that were rife with potential controversy who had fewer enemies," said Ron Kroese, an environment program officer at the McKnight Foundation. "There is just something about him."

Now, McGuinness is 60 and ready to retire — sort of. His last day at Audubon, where he has served as director of the Upper Mississippi River Initiative for the past decade, is later this week. But it's not as if he's retiring completely. McGuinness said he still plans to work on river issues, mainly specific projects that offer obvious on-the-ground improvements.

What you notice first about Dan McGuinness is his appearance: With his sunglasses, omnipresent blue jeans and flannel shirts, he and the river, shall we say, seem a good fit. Then there's his personality, a mixture of optimism and cheerfulness that people — even those who disagree with him — find hard to resist.

What sets him apart, though, is his passion to make the river a healthier place.

It's been that way since 1968, when the Blooming Prairie, Minn., farm boy and Winona State University biology student got a summer job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "They gave me a 16-foot boat, a 33-horsepower motor, a trailer and a pickup truck, and I spent my whole summer on the river, doing everything from bird banding to litter pickup to trail maintenance," McGuinness said. "I did whatever they needed me to do. That's when I got hooked on the Mississippi." He worked the job for three summers. Then, between other stints, he worked as an independent environmental consultant, as head of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission, and finally with Audubon.

There, he's been part of a string of campaigns, including establishing bird habitat and viewing areas and building support for ecological restoration along the upper river. Along the way, from documenting increasing boat traffic on the St. Croix to influencing plans for a floodwall design at St.

Paul's Holman Field airport, he has built a reputation for pushing his points using facts instead of emotion.

"He is always very balanced, very well researched," said Anne Hunt, St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman's deputy policy director for the environment. "He is just a very, very credible person. When he stands up at city councils or public hearings, people listen."

While head of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission, which used to coordinate river and land polices between the two states, he worked on common management policies and documented heavier boating levels on the St. Croix. Nothing he worked on, though, was quite as big as the fractious battle between environmental groups and the Army Corps of Engineers over its plan to expand the system of locks and dams on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois rivers. The two sides locked horns and stayed locked. Over time, the Corps of Engineers was caught cooking the books to justify the expansion project and was ordered to redo its plan. At that point, McGuiness and Audubon persuaded other environmentalists to take a less confrontational approach. With McGuiness representing the environmentalists, they joined forces with other river interests, including the barge industry, and went to Washington in 2006. They testified before congressional committees and urged a compromise that would authorize the expansion project but also would do something else: earmark \$1.7 billion for ecosystem restoration along the river.

Last year, Congress went along with the compromise. "He was pivotal to working not only with the navigation industry but also with other environmental groups to help forge this compromise that basically became a win-win," said Steve Johnson, a college roommate and now chief of resource management for the National Park Service's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. "I don't think there's any way either (industry) or the environment, as a stand-alone, would have gotten that bill passed," added Lee Nelson, head of the Upper River Services barge operation.

"We really evaluated whether that was the right move, because we risked offending some of our conservation organizations," McGuiness said. "But we really looked at it very carefully from an ecological perspective and thought, if Congress would approve \$1.7 billion for ecosystems over the next 15 years, there would be a net gain. The fact is the lock-and-dam system is already in place, and the additional impacts of expansion would be pretty small based on what already had been done."

Recently, McGuiness has been working on an eaglet-banding effort from Minneapolis to the south end of Lake Pepin. The project, paid for by such groups as Audubon, the National Park Service and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, aims to test the eagles' blood to find out how healthy the population is and whether they are accumulating industrial chemicals.

With McGuiness leaving Audubon, lots of people hope he doesn't just fade out of the scene.

"I don't think we are going to let him," Nelson said. "He's got credibility on all sides of the issue, and the river issues are not going to go away. We have one river and a great number of legitimate beneficiaries, and we need to figure out how we all coexist." McGuiness conceded that, even officially retired, it'll be tough keeping him out of the Mississippi's backwaters.

"Every time I took that fork in the road, it got me closer to the river, and it has taken me back to that summer in '68 when I was completely captivated by it," he said. "And I'm still captivated by it. "I always kid people that I started my career in a 16-foot boat banding wood ducks, and now I'm ending my full-time career in an 18-foot boat banding eagles."

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Dan's new contact information will be dan@dmcguiness.com and check out his new website at www.dmcguiness.com

Audubon Minnesota Summer Member Appreciation Events. Sign-up!

Birdwatching and Bagels, 8 am, Monday, June 30th, Belwin

Birdwatch with us at one of the largest remaining undeveloped tracts of land near the Metro-area. Belwin is located on 1,300 acres near Afton and is used by St. Paul school kids for outdoor instruction. The land, not open to the public without special permission, contains woods, wetlands, tallgrass prairies, goat prairies, oak savannas, spring-fed cold water streams, marshes, floating bogs, potholes, oak and maple/basswood forests and farmland being restored to prairie. We'll birdwatch and top-off the morning with bagels, juice and coffee. Free. RSVP by June 25th.

Birds, Beer and Baseball, 7 pm, Monday, July 28th, Twins vs. White Sox

Audubon Twins fans, bring your family and friends to this evening's Twins game at the Metrodome. We're working on getting a section of a sky box donated (no guarantees yet!). At the very least, we'll all sit together, drink beer, eat peanuts and talk about birds and of course, baseball! \$20/person. RSVP by July 9th.

RSVP for both events to Susan Solterman at 651-260-7040 or email me at ssolterman@audubon.org. Carpooling arrangements will be made.

Enter Minnesota Environmental Fund's "10,000 Reasons Why" Photo Contest

[Minnesota Environmental Fund](#), a workplace giving program that the Sierra Club Foundation benefits from, is looking for images that demonstrate what you value about Minnesota's environment. Enter before June 21 and win great prizes. [Check out last year's winners](#) (left is Eric Krenz's picture, one of last year's winners) and [submit your photo today!](#)

Save the Date! 2008 Fall Members Meeting and Annual Dinner – Saturday, November 8, 2008

Folks – we heard your feedback. The annual fall dinner is reinstated! Yippee! We'll have our Fall Members Meeting during the day and conclude with a lovely dinner.

Our dinner speaker will be Brian "Fox" Ellis, a storyteller, author, and naturalist and has worked with The Field Museum, The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library to provide docent and teacher training, develop curriculum, and public programs. He is the Artistic Director of Prairie Folklore Theatre, a unique theatre company that celebrates ecology and history through original musical. Brian is also the author of eight books including, *Learning From the Land: Teaching Ecology Through Stories and Activities*, (Libraries Unlimited, 1997). Mr. Ellis will present "Adventures with John James Audubon" depicting America's greatest naturalist and wildlife artist in his studio. Storyteller Ellis becomes John James Audubon in this first-person living history program. Audubon will enchant audiences with stories of his travels in the wildest places on the planet as he finishes drawing every known bird in North America. Drawing from Audubon's journals, letters, and scientific essays, this presentation will explore the scientific method, art history, and bird migration in the early 1800s in a presentation sure to satisfy all ages.

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