



Audubon WASHINGTON

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Audubon is ready for the 2003 Legislative Session! Top Priorities are Budget and Conservation Action

On December 7, 2002, the Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee (WSACC) cited the state budget and defending existing environmental protection laws as Audubon Washington's top policy priorities during the 2003 state legislative session. Twenty-three representatives from 15 of Washington's 25 local Chapters met in North Bend to sift through upcoming issues that could affect birds and the habitat they depend upon. After many lively conversations and debates, the WSACC agreed on the following top priorities:

Operating Budget. The Governor's proposed budget will cut funding for environmental programs to 1.3% of our state's general funds. This is down from 2.3% in 1989. Specifically at risk this year were the shorebird and bird habitat monitoring programs, Spartina control funding (an invasive shoreline weed devastating bird habitat), wetlands protection, state park funding and implementing environmental laws like the State Environmental Protection Act and The Growth Management Act.

When Governor Locke released his proposed budget on December 17, Audubon found that \$402,000 had been placed in the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Department's (WDFW) budget "to investigate and begin addressing the reductions in marine bird populations". Specifically, this means WDFW will carry out the Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring (PSAMP) program including marine bird surveys and monitoring work.

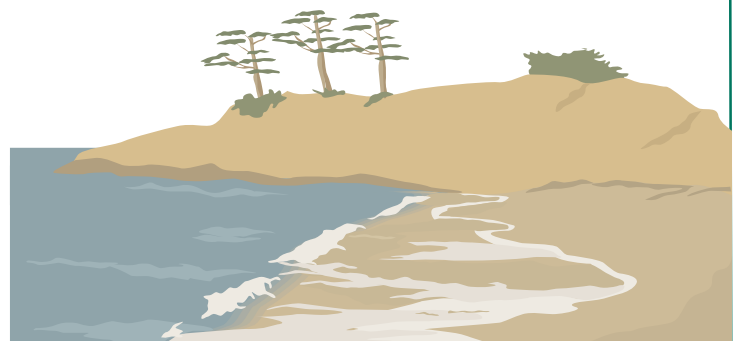
Luckily, Audubon also found that WDFW was given additional resources of \$466,000 to continue efforts to control and manage Spartina infestations within the state. This will help Willapa Bay and will be part of the required match to the federal funds Congressman Norm Dicks helped secure in 2002.

Even though these two items are in the Governor's budget, we need to remember that this is just "Round One". This year, the Senate will write their own draft budget, pass it over to

the House and then back to the Governor. So, the December 17 version of the budget is only the beginning. Audubon staff will monitor each step of the budget process and keep you informed through [Bird's Eye View](#).

Capital Budget. Audubon supports funding of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) at \$55 million because this land acquisition program helps preserve bird habitat. Unfortunately, the Governor's budget only has \$30 million; an all-time low for this important program. Capital funds in WWRP give birders public access to state lands, which means more, birding tours and connections with nature centers. For example, \$1.2 million was earmarked in WWRP to purchase land near the Dungeness River Audubon Center, which is prime bird habitat near Sequim on the Olympic Peninsula. We will strenuously argue to keep the Dungeness funds in the WWRP budget (even at the \$30 million level), but Audubon will work hard to increase overall WWRP funds.

Shorelines. Throughout 2002, Audubon was part of a negotiating team to develop a solution to resolve disputes over shoreline protection. Over the past two years, local governments and business have disagreed with Ecology on new shoreline regulations. Attorney General Chris Gregoire brought all the parties together in January 2002 to hammer out acceptable regulations.





After months of negotiations, Audubon, the Washington Environmental Council, People for Puget Sound and the League of Women Voters (and several other environmental groups) have agreed to the proposed regulations. (The regulations still need to go through the official rule making process in early 2003.) We are pleased with the “No Net Loss” policy in the regulations and other protective measures for our shorelines.

The only glitch for shoreline protection is, of course, funding for local governments to carry out the new rules. The Governor’s budget does include \$2 million to implement the negotiated regulations for shoreline protection. Maintaining this budget item will be one of Audubon’s top priorities.

Environmental Protection. Audubon is a team member with other conservation organizations and community interests to repel potential attacks on our fundamental environmental laws such as growth management, hydraulic permits for construction work near water, and public involvement in agency rule-making. As of the first week of session, we know that the Senate Republicans are very interested in introducing bills that may threaten our fundamental environmental laws and public involvement process. We will keep you up to date as we learn about these proposals.

Water Resources. Audubon will support expanded funding for local governments to do watershed planning. When citizens are involved in planning the future of their watershed, people, birds, wildlife, local businesses and farms can thrive. And, to promote citizen involvement, Audubon staff has worked with the Wenatchee and Tacoma Audubon Chapters to increase citizen participation in watershed planning to incorporate local knowledge and build constituencies for passage and implementation of plans. Audubon will support legislation that adequately funds watershed planning and encourages civic participation.

Conservation District Accountability. Conservation Districts work with the agricultural community to restore habitat for fish, birds and wildlife. Audubon encourages broad public involvement in Conservation District efforts. We will support legislation that gives Conservation Districts the choice of including their elections on the general ballot.

Environmental Education. Audubon is working with teachers, the Woodland Park Zoo and the Governor’s Council on Environmental Education to re-introduce a bill creating *The Natural Science, Wildlife and Environmental Education Partnership Fund* within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Although this year we are not asking for any money for this account, we want to set up the account because it will allow teachers to create outdoor educational experiences for their students. We’ve heard from teachers and parents alike, that when students are in an outdoor setting and learning basic skills in math, science, writing, and reading, they tend to retain their lessons and become much more interested in the subject matter. Consequently, the new Partnership Fund will make learning more interesting and help our students master the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). This fund will also leverage resources (volunteers, private funding, in-kind contributions) from non-profit organizations to support students and teachers.

INVITATION TO MEET YOUR FELLOW CONSERVATION ACTIVISTS AND LEGISLATORS

When: Saturday January 11

What: Environmental Community Pre-Session Briefing

Where: The Mountaineers in Seattle (just north of downtown)

Why: Learn about ALL environmental issues facing the 2003 Legislative session (energy, mercury, state parks, water quality, etc. etc.)

Register online at <http://www.wecprotects.org>

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We hope you enjoy reading the Bird’s Eye View during the legislative sessions. As usual, Audubon will constantly research, write about and mail you the latest information on what is happening in Olympia. Because this year is a “long session” (105 days), we will send BEV out every two weeks.

We want to be very efficient with your Audubon contributions, so we are cleaning up our mailing lists to stop duplicate mailings. If you want to receive BEV in 2003, please complete the sign up form and mail us \$20. If we do not receive your form and check by February 1 we will have to drop you from the mailing list. Thank you very much for understanding our need to be VERY efficient in this time of scarce resources!



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Olympia WA 98504-0600

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- § Limit faxes to three pages and always include the name of the legislative recipient on the cover sheet.

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Audubon WASHINGTON

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To conserve and restore natural ecosystems,
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and their habitats for the benefit of
humanity and the earth's biological diversity.