

2020 Legislative Priorities

Climate

Audubon's new climate report, [Survival by Degrees](#), shows that two-thirds of North American birds are at risk of extinction if we fail to act on climate change. If we take bold action and hold temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, three-quarters of those species will be better off. Protecting birds and people from climate change is within reach, but we must act. Audubon Washington is committed to working with our partners and elected officials to do everything we can to combat climate change.

Net Zero, Natural Solutions

The best available science shows that avoiding the worst impacts of climate change requires reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century. Washington state must update our emissions targets to reflect the most up-to-date science while also including targets for carbon sequestration in our landscape. Our farms, fields, forests, and aquatic lands can play a central role in our state's efforts to combat climate change. By leveraging nature's ability to sequester carbon, we'll also support healthy rural landscapes and economies.



The Sustainable Farm and Fields grant program (SB 5947) is an excellent example of the kind of program that invests in carbon sequestration while also supporting habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Audubon will be supporting SB 5947, as well as forthcoming legislation that sets science-based emissions targets including specific carve outs for carbon sequestration.

Transportation Electrification

With the passage of the Clean Energy Transformation Act, Washington state is on its way to a 100% clean electric grid. This is a great step forward, but roughly half of our climate changing emissions come from the transportation sector. To combat climate change and protect the health of birds and people we must electrify as much of our transportation system as possible.

That's why Audubon will be supporting HB 1110 (the clean fuel standard) and SB 5811 (the Zero Emissions Vehicle program). Both bills help make meaningful progress towards shifting our transportation sector onto an increasingly clean electric grid.

Responsible Solar Siting

Achieving 100% clean electricity will require additional renewable energy development across Washington state. Audubon is working with a variety of stakeholders, including American Farmland Trust and Washington State University's Energy Program, to spearhead a least-conflict priority siting process that will make responsibly siting renewable energy more effective and efficient.

This program, based on a successful process in California's San Joaquin Valley, will convene a wide array of stakeholders to map out the best places for utility scale PV solar in Washington state's Columbia Basin. With our new science on sagebrush songbird distributions in hand, we're well positioned to protect the best remaining habitats for sagebrush birds. If successful, this stakeholder-driven process can be replicated in other parts of the state where there is pressure to develop renewable energy.

In 2020, Audubon and our partners will be seeking a modest proviso to support Washington State University's Energy Program in facilitating this process.

Conservation

Fully funding the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

In a state valued for nature and outdoor recreation, less than 1% of the general fund goes to support all natural resource agencies combined. WDFW plays a key role in monitoring, protecting, and enhancing habitat that birds depend upon, but their level of funding has not kept pace with the level of service our state expects.

In the 2019 legislative session, the legislature authorized \$15M in the first fiscal year of the biennium. Unfortunately, the \$8.5M the legislature authorized for the second fiscal year leaves \$6.7M of WDFW's conservation activities at risk.

Audubon supports WDFW's full budget request of \$26M in the supplemental operating budget, including the maintenance level of \$12.5M, emergent needs of \$6.8M, and the \$6.7M of at-risk activities. These funds will help support species and habitat stewardship across the state.

Protecting Orcas

Ongoing efforts to protect the Southern Resident Orca population are critical to supporting ecosystem level habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement. The 2019 legislative session saw big progress for protecting Orcas, but there is still work to be done.

Audubon is supporting the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) efforts to establish an executive level oversight team in formal co-management with tribes, as well as moving from a "no net loss" to a "net ecological gain" standard for project approval and permitting in marine and freshwater environments.

"No net loss" allows significant harm to critical habitats with an assumption that mitigation will be required and successful. Moving to "net ecological gain" ensures that the natural environment is left in a measurably better condition than beforehand. To protect Orcas, vulnerable bird species, and the other wildlife we care about, we must do more to restore and enhance habitat, not simply mitigate harm.

Plastic Bags

Plastic pollution is a serious threat to habitat, particularly in the marine environment. Because of emerging challenges in the market for recyclable plastics, Washington state should adopt new strategies to reduce the impacts of plastic pollution.

Audubon will join our EPC partners in continuing to support of SB 5323, which passed the senate in 2019 but didn't make it to the house floor.

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