



Dear Audubon in Washington,

The 2016 legislative session ended almost a month ago on March 29th and I was immediately out in the fields of Eastern Washington helping raise awareness for sagebrush steppe conservation, counting grouse (my favorite thing to do!), and meeting with chapters I don't get to visit all that often – please accept my apologies for the delay in this summary, it's been an exceptionally busy spring.

First, a big thanks to Neil Beaver for being our legislative consultant and our eyes and ears in Olympia this year. With Neil's help, we were able to track more bills, sign-in to more hearings, and build relationships with like-minded organizations and legislators – relationships we hope to leverage for bird-issues in 2017.

Overview: As anticipated, the 2016 legislative session was tough for conservation issues as well as new ideas. The environmental community was able to prevent a number of bills that would have harmed both water quality and the public's ability to engage in local projects.

The Good:

- Investments in forest health to help prevent catastrophic fires including [HB 2928](#), a forest resiliency burning pilot project; (no large fire bills passed).
- Prevention of bad bills including [HB 2840](#) (water pollution via concentrated animal feeding operation) and [SB 6224](#) (stripping public involvement in energy facility permitting).
- The Senate was not able to prevent the Governor from creating a climate rule ([SB 6173](#)).

The Bad:

- Unable to pass a bill regarding renewable energy ([HB 2346](#)) due to Senate amendment that would prevent the Governor from enacting a clean air rule.
- Unable to prevent major cuts to the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), i.e. a complete sweep of the Public Participation Grant Program and funding for local government investments in storm-water infrastructure projects across the state.

Click [here for a list of the bills](#) that passed the legislature this session.

Headlines following the end of session:

- [Carbon-tax initiative goes to November ballot](#)
- [Inslee signs updated bipartisan budget with wildfire and mental health funding, says next big lift on education remains](#)
- [EPC Leg Session Summary](#)

Update on Carbon Pricing

Understanding that climate change is the [number one threat to birds](#), we continue to have thoughtful conversations in our spring regional meetings and among chapter leaders about putting a price on carbon in Washington State and Audubon's potential involvement with [I-732](#) – the carbon tax proposal that will be on our ballots in November 2016. The Audubon Washington state board will be meeting on May 4th to discuss and, hopefully, make a decision on whether or not to support I-732.

Has your board been having similar conversations? Do you have a sense of whether or not your membership supports or opposes I-732? What are your thoughts about the issue? Please email the [Chapter Conservation Manager](#) with your thoughts, questions, or concerns. Ultimately, we look forward to moving together as a network in support of effective climate change solutions.

Note that last week the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy came out with a statement in opposition to I-732, as have several of their coalition partners.

Current Opportunities for Action

There are a number of opportunities on the horizon in need of public participation:

- **Washington Clean Air Rule:** The draft rule, released by the Department of Ecology for public comment in early January and then withdrawn for revision, is now reissued for public comment. To learn more see the WDOE [website](#) and watch a [recording of today's webinar](#).
- **Millennium Bulk Terminal Longview:** The [MBTL draft EIS](#) will be released on April 29th, opening the 45 day comment period. Hearings will be held on May 24th in Longview, May 26th in Spokane, and June 2nd in Pasco. For more information click [here](#). The last day to submit comments will be June 13, 2016.
- **Oil Movement by Rail and Pipeline:** The Department of Ecology is [proposing two rules](#) to enhance oil transportation safety in Washington. The [first rule](#) establishes notice requirements for facilities receiving crude oil by rail and pipelines transporting crude oil. The [second rule](#) describes contingency planning requirements for railroads that transport oil (crude or refined) in bulk. WDOE is holding [four public hearings](#) on this rule proposal, one each in Spokane (May 17th), Everett (May 23rd), and Vancouver (June 3rd), and one via webinar (May 26). Comments can also be [submitted online](#) through June 10th.

Preparing for the 2017 Legislative Session

In the fall of 2015, WSACC passed a resolution on [Reform in the Regulation of Urban Forest Practices](#). At this time, the groundwork is being laid to address a loophole under Washington Forest Practices regulations that excludes large scale logging (i.e. 20 or more contiguous acres) in urban growth areas from environmental review and from the jurisdiction of the municipality. We should have a good idea of what our bill will include by early August.

Please contact the [Chapter Conservation Manager](#) with questions or if you would like to be part of the bill development process.