

# MINNESOTA STATEWIDE POLICY INITIATIVES 2024

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Rob Schultz  
**POLICY DIRECTOR:** Lindsay J. Brice  
Ph.D.

**LOBBYIST:** Kimberly Scott  
**CONSERVATION DIRECTOR:** Dale Gentry,

## Policy Priorities

1. Protect and restore habitat for birds.
2. Advocate for state-level policies that positively impact birds and defend against those that negatively impact birds.
3. Advance state-level policies that further climate action.

## Strategies

- Advocate for Audubon’s priorities with state policymakers and secure funding to stop and reverse the decline in bird populations and biodiversity.<sup>1</sup>
- Engage and support Audubon chapters and members to use their voices.
- Build and support bipartisan relationships.
- Develop legislative champions in areas where we do our conservation work.

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## Lead

- Advocate for 2024 ENRTF appropriations and recommendations of the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#). Support the integrity of the process and intent of the funds. Defend against proposed raids.
  - \$ This year’s allocation includes approximately \$79 million for projects “that protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota’s air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources,” including a recommendation for \$342,000 in direct funding to Audubon Minnesota for [Conservation Grazing for Birds, Beef, and Better Soil](#). Program Manager: Dale Gentry, Ph.D.
  - \$ Ongoing projects receiving LCCMR funding
    - Mapping Migratory Bird Pitstops in Minnesota
    - Habitat Associations of Mississippi Bottomland Forest Marsh Birds
- Advocate for [2024 Outdoor Heritage Fund](#) appropriations and recommendations of the [Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council \(LSOHC\)](#). Support the integrity of the process and intent of the funds while defending against proposed raids.
  - \$ This year’s package includes approximately \$167 million for projects to “restore, protect, and enhance Minnesota’s wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife,” including a recommendation for \$1,924,000 in direct funding to Audubon Minnesota for Floodplain and Upland Forest Enhancement – Mississippi River, Phase 5. Program Manager: Dale Gentry, Ph.D. & Jeffrey Butler

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<sup>1</sup> The 2023 MN State Legislative Session commences February 12, 2024.

- § Ongoing projects receiving Outdoor Heritage funding:
  - Restoring & Enhancing Minnesota’s Important Bird Areas in the St. Croix River Valley. Program Manager: Dale Gentry, PhD & Sarah Hewitt
  - Protect and Restore Minnesota’s Important Bird Areas within the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands. Program Manager: Alex Wardwell
  - Floodplain Forest Enhancement – Mississippi River, Phases 3 and 4. Program Manager: Jeff Butler
- Defend the [Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund \(ENRTF\)](#) 2024 ballot measure, including the new community grant program created to address equity concerns.
- Advocate for native plants to support ecosystem integrity and provide food and habitat for native birds. This includes but is not limited to urban tree canopy and wildlife habitat.

### **Support**

- Bonding and supplemental budget requests that protect and restore habitat for birds, including working lands.
- Clean energy initiatives and the accelerated build-out of transmission capacity while mitigating unintended negative consequences for people and wildlife.
- Climate justice through policies that advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Policies to reduce lead in the environment, i.e., nontoxic ammunition incentives and lead fishing tackle buyback programs.
- Support Audubon conservation staff on Requests for Proposals for state funding: LSOHC, LCCMR, [Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program](#) (CPL): approximately five rounds of RFPs annually.

### **Monitor**

- Establishment of a certified salt applicator program to reduce salt pollution in Minnesota water.
- Proposed policy and/or funding related to:
  - Wetlands Conservation Act
  - Impact of pesticides on birds
  - Changes to hunting regulations related to birds
  - The protection of [Important Bird Areas](#) within [School Trust Lands](#). This includes 88,440 acres of high-value conservation land and carbon-sequestering forest habitat for birds
  - The [Sustainable Forest Incentive Act](#) and the [Sustainable Timber Harvest Plan](#)
  - The Great Lakes (i.e., St. Louis River Estuary)
  - Aquatic Invasive Species such as invasive cattails
  - Terrestrial Invasive Species such as reed canary grass near rivers and the emerald ash borer
  - [Mowing and haying](#)

### **Expanding our Influence**

- Appointments to relevant boards and commissions such as: [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#), [Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council \(LSOHC\)](#), [Governor’s Advisory Council on Climate Change](#), Minnesota Forest Resource Council, Governor’s Residence Council
- Bird Outings with policymakers

- Support Audubon chapters and Wild Ones' work to install native plant gardens at the Governor's Residence.

Updated 12.14.23

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