



MINNESOTA

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Chair Fong Hawj  
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
95 University Ave. W.  
Minnesota Senate Building 3231  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 13, 2023

**Re: Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund Reauthorization**

Dear Chair Hawj and Members of the Committee:

Audubon Minnesota and affiliated Audubon chapters across Minnesota support S.F. 2404 and ask that you create a ballot question to allow Minnesota voters to decide whether to continue dedicating state lottery proceeds to the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund.

The wildlife that Minnesotans hold dear, including the birds Audubon strives to conserve, are dependent on diverse and thriving habitats that emerge from a foundation of healthy air, water, and soil. Eagles, loons, and herons consume fish that eat other fish, amphibians, and microorganisms at the bottom of the food chain that depends on healthy freshwater. Warblers and swallows depend upon insects that eat the plants that require healthy soil to grow. In natural environments with adequate and healthy soil and water, populations are relatively stable and thrive.

We have lost nearly three billion of America's birds in the past 50 years. North American bird populations have declined by 29%, and grassland bird populations have declined by 53% since 1970. Two-thirds of our bird species are threatened by lost or degraded habitat or water quality. Audubon's conservation vision – that we protect birds throughout their entire lifecycle – requires addressing threats to birds and the places they need, now and into the future.

We believe that what is good for birds is good for people. Audubon Minnesota leverages every available dollar to conserve and restore the highest priority regions for birds and people. Minnesota's Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund has enabled our organization to conduct avian surveys in the bottomland forests of the Mississippi River, restore critical habitat for 100+ species of birds, and enhance a vital migratory corridor. Avian surveys inform our work to conduct landscape-scale restoration of floodplain forests.

Some of the specific projects that Audubon Minnesota has implemented with Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund grants in recent years have included:

- Development of the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas
- Creating a Statewide Wetland Bird Survey
- Local Planning & Implementation Efforts for Bird Habitat



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- Implementing Conservation Plans for Avian Species of Concern
- The creation of the Bird City Minnesota program
- Research on bird habitat associations on the Mississippi River

This type of funding in MN has enabled us to capitalize on federally leveraged funds and partner with local organizations, counties, cities, and citizen scientists.

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund benefits current citizens and future generations by providing long-term, consistent, and stable funding for projects to protect, conserve, and enhance Minnesota's "air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources," and has provided funding to nearly 1,800 projects across the state of Minnesota since 1991.

We urge you to support these efforts to protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources by supporting S.F. 2404 and authorizing a ballot question to continue dedicating state lottery proceeds to the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Rob Schultz  
Vice President

Dr. Dale Gentry  
Conservation Director

Lindsay J. Brice  
Policy Director

[Audubon Minnesota Iowa Missouri](#)

**Alongside the following independent Audubon chapters across Minnesota:**

- Peter Mattson, President of [Austin Audubon Society](#)
- Catherine McGoldrick, Vice President of [Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society](#)
- Daniel Kneip, President of [Central Minnesota Audubon Chapter](#)
- Rob Daves, President of [Minnesota River Valley Audubon Society](#)
- Peter Buesseler, President of [Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society](#)
- Viola Riggle, President of [Prairie Lakes Audubon Society](#)
- Greg Burnes, President of [St. Paul Audubon Society](#)
- Dann Adair, President of [Wild River Audubon Society](#)
- Joel Dunnette, President of [Zumbro Valley Audubon Society](#)