

Conservation Action *(Continued from Page 7)*

Also, by Spring 2008 the state office will generate a packet of materials for chapters to use in educating ourselves and the public about public policy and personal life-style changes needed to combat global warming.

We also learned about two important ballot measures proposed for fall that will affect conservation efforts in this state. Ballot Measure 960 is Tim Eyman's latest attempt to limit taxes. Because it requires any tax increase above the rate of inflation to be approved by 2/3 of the state legislature, it will make state expenditures to meet conservation and global warming goals very difficult. Audubon members are urged to vote "no" on Ballot Measure 960.

The second measure is for a sales tax increase of 7 cents on the dollar in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties that will create about \$11 billion dollars (62%) for light rail and other mass transit and \$7 billion dollars for roads and bridges. This is not a perfect compromise because 15% of the total funds will go for general highway expansion projects, but Audubon WA office supports the measure because of its support of mass transit.

WA Audubon sent chapter and state leaders to Washington, D.C., to advocate for three federal bills that will affect bird populations: federal oil spill legislation, rules for the use of public lands for grazing, and new regulations to require cleaning of ballast water dumped from ships.

Finally, here is some important news from the Audubon WA office. First, Nina Carter has agreed to stay on as director. She stated that a large part of her motivation is an initiative to create policies to unify the chapters into one voice on conservation matters. Another part was the decision to consolidate the two state offices to save about \$250,000 per year and save wear-and-tear on the office staff. In mid August the Seattle office will be closed.

I-960 Threatens Future Conservation Funding

Audubon Washington is joining a growing coalition opposed to Initiative 960 – on the statewide ballot this November – because it would put funding for

conservation and clean-up of natural ecosystems and bird and wildlife habitat at risk.

Tim Eyman's latest initiative would make it much more difficult to obtain vital public funding for conservation. I-960 is a rigid, confusing and costly bureaucratic proposal to vastly expand the definition of a "tax increase." It would require the approval of two-thirds of the State Legislature, along with expensive public advisory votes in many cases, on every change in revenue, even routine fund transfers.

Innovative efforts to fund conservation or clean-up projects would have to be sold to a supermajority of legislators – and in many cases to the public as well – as a tax increase, even if they did not raise anyone's taxes. Actions that require a public advisory vote would be identified as a "tax increase" and allotted just 13 words in the voters' pamphlet to justify their ten year cost. Hundreds of millions in state dollars would be wasted on endless ballots and expensive court battles over how to interpret I-960, leaving even less for important environmental priorities.

Even transferring funds from one state account to another to fund conservation would be a "tax increase" and could be held up by a minority of lawmakers.

Routine decisions about budgets and fees could be turned into polarizing debates over "tax increases" if I-960 is approved. Raising the parking fee at state recreational areas by 25 cents to invest in maintenance would require legislative action as a "tax increase."

It is already difficult enough to obtain funds for efforts like the State Department of Ecology's grants to improve and protect dozens of waters across the state.

When you cast your ballot in November, imagine how hard it would be to get funding for any Audubon priority – even inflation adjustments to current projects, to say nothing of new investment – if I-960 is approved.

Audubon Washington is a member of the statewide Washington Tax Fairness Coalition. To find out more about I-960 visit their website:
www.WATaxFairness.org.