

**Audubon California**  
**Climate Change Policy Principles**  
**December 2009**

Climate change is the biggest environmental threat of our time. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, man-made greenhouse gases (GHGs) may contribute to the extinction of 20-30 percent of all species on earth by mid-century. Atmospheric concentrations of GHGs are already high enough to impact the Earth's natural systems, even if we significantly limit future GHG emissions today. Audubon California is working to address both climate change challenges: **mitigation** of GHG emissions and ecosystem **adaptation** to climate change impacts. The general principles articulated below guide our work.

**I. Mitigation**

Audubon California supports the climate change/energy/transportation policy goals of the broader California environmental community. Energy efficiency, demand side management, renewable portfolio standards, distributed generation (generating electricity from smaller, more locally based energy sources), alternative fueled vehicles, smart growth, emission caps, and other policy tools are all critical to reducing GHG emissions.

Audubon California recognizes that all viable forms of renewable energy production will need to be utilized in order for California to meet its aggressive renewable energy goal of 33% by the Year 2020. Wind, wave, geothermal, solar and other renewables should be planned, sited and operated in a manner that prioritizes avoidance of habitat disturbance over mitigation in addressing negative impacts on bird and wildlife populations.

Audubon California strongly supports maximizing the contribution from distributed generation to help meet the renewable energy goals of California. The environmental benefits often afforded by distributed generation mandate that such solutions and technologies be given priority in the development of a practicable and sustainable energy future for California. In particular market barriers that disadvantage the robust development of distributed renewable energy facilities should be eliminated.

Audubon California supports the development of sustainable funding sources to mitigate long term habitat loss, to fund potential reclamation needs at the end of the life of renewable energy projects, and to implement scientifically derived monitoring protocols at the planning area level.

Transmission networks necessary to move new sources of renewable energy to market can present significant risk to habitat values for birds, other wildlife and plant species and result in energy inefficiency due to losses incurred in the transmission process over long distances. Audubon California supports upgrading existing networks as the first choice for increasing transmission capacity. Where existing networks are not feasible, priority should be given to building new energy transmission networks alongside existing utility corridors and other transportation rights of way to minimize habitat disturbance.

California's forests, rangelands and wetlands can mitigate climate change by capturing carbon

and storing it for centuries. Audubon California supports the development of science-based climate change mitigation policies that protect and advance natural systems and habitat conditions in the state. Audubon California will work to promote habitat-based carbon sequestration and to make sure that revenues generated by GHG mitigation mechanisms are available to help build ecosystem resilience and connectivity.

## **II. Adaptation**

Impacts from climate change are already observable and measurable in California's bird life and other natural systems throughout our state. California must act now to begin to plan, adequately fund and implement strategies to protect the important natural resources of our state in the face of climate change.

Audubon California supports science-based policies and programs that protect, restore, and conserve California habitats important for birds and other wildlife to enable them to adapt to, and withstand the impacts of climate change. We will work in partnership with a full range of stakeholders and governance arrangements to maintain connectivity of ecosystems including protected areas and corridors in working landscapes.

Audubon California supports policies and programs that focus on the conservation of climatically stable refuges for birds and ecosystems. Research by Audubon staff show areas in California where species and bird communities occur today and are projected to persist across all future climates. As more information becomes available for other flora and fauna, these areas should be given preference for restoration, acquisition, and corridors.

Audubon California supports maximizing the use of ecosystem-based adaptation strategies that harness the power of nature to help human communities adapt to climate change. We support the development of a range of local and landscape scale initiatives for managing ecosystems to increase resilience and maintain essential ecosystem services and reduce the vulnerability of people, their livelihoods and nature in the face of climate change.

Audubon California supports ecosystem-based strategies that can contribute to cost-effective adaptation results here in California such as:

- Protecting and enhancing vital ecosystem services, such as water flows and water quality;
- Maintaining and restoring "natural infrastructure" such as coastal dunes, forests, wetlands, and rangelands, as cost-effective means for reducing vulnerability to storm surge, rising sea levels and changing precipitation patterns; and
- Reducing land and water degradation through actively preventing, and controlling the spread of invasive species.