

CONSERVATION POLICY RESOLUTIONS

GREAT SALT LAKE AUDUBON

Great Salt Lake Audubon (hereinafter sometimes referred to as GSLA) is one of four Utah chapters of National Audubon Society (NAS, founded 1886). GSLA was founded in 1912, and became an affiliated chapter of NAS in 1936. The Constitution of GSLA states that its purposes and objectives include educational and scientific support of the pursuits of NAS. GSLA is primarily concerned with those portions of Utah not covered by other chapters, but matters of national import which also significantly impact Utah are also of concern to GSLA.

These resolutions provide the basis for GSLA's conservation efforts concerning birds, other wildlife and their habitats through education and advocacy. These areas of concern are integral to accomplishing the mission of GSLA, which is

“ dedicated to protecting and enhancing habitat for wild birds, animals and plants, and to maintaining healthy and diverse environments for wildlife and people.”

The Bylaws of GSLA provide that “[t]he duties of the Board of Directors are to determine GSLA's mission, set goals and objectives and to work towards their achievement.” In working to achieve these goals and objectives the Board may adopt resolutions to guide the President and other members of the Board of Directors, as well as members of various Committees of GSLA and staff, who will from time to time testify or provide written or oral comments to legislative bodies, government agencies and governmental officials, or to media outlets such as newspaper, radio or television. As resolutions are adopted by the Board they shall be added to these Conservation Policy Resolutions.

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I. CONSERVATION ACTIONS

The Conservation Policy Resolutions of GSLA are positions advocated and actions to be taken by GSLA, (“**conservation actions**”) including protection of bird habitats in wetlands, shorelines, grasslands, and forests, protection of riparian habitats including further cleanup of the Jordan River and its tributaries, adoption of smart growth principles, addressing the national importance of global warming and its impact on all life forms on our planet, including birds, other wildlife and their habitat, addressing the impacts of pesticide spraying on birds and their habitat, and increasing state and federal funds for clean water, wetland and land protection and wildlife programs.

Many of these conservation actions, and policies adopted under such conservation actions, are part of NAS’s bird, forest, wetlands and wildlife conservation campaigns. Smart growth activities link many of these critical issues on a local community basis, as well as through state programs and incentives. All of these resolutions are the basis for GSLA’s advocacy by its grassroots activists, its Board of Directors, committees and staff.

It is GSLA’s hope that these conservation policy resolutions will help guide the policy makers of Utah at all levels as they consider measures affecting land use, conservation and our environment.

II. CONSERVATION FUNDING

Securing adequate and sustainable funding for environmental programs is an essential conservation policy for GSLA. GSLA supports dedicated funding streams and reasonable fees to support state conservation programs. Specifically, GSLA supports the creation of state, as well as local, environmental funds, to be funded through taxing power, or through state fees, to fund acquisition and protection of open space (i.e. natural areas), wetland and farmland protection, local recycling, state wildlife protection programs and other worthy environmental programs in the State of Utah.

III. BIRDS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Habitat loss is one of the leading threats to bird populations in Utah and across the nation. Much of the habitat loss today is occurring due to sprawl in suburban and rural areas and the related need for additional highways and transportation corridors to connect poorly planned growth. Consequently, the GSLA is committed to an approach that uses collaborative land use planning to promote sound land use and open space decisions. GSLA strongly supports state smart growth legislation and land use decisions which will

ultimately preserve natural areas, open space, farmland and other critical habitats; similarly, GSLA encourages funding for local comprehensive planning.

In regard to broader wildlife policy and programs, GSLA will continue to work with state and local agencies on issues related to habitat protection and restoration efforts for threatened and other species of conservation concern (e.g., state sensitive species). We work on broad ecosystem issues, such as the management of Great Salt Lake in relation to shorebirds, as well as forest and grassland bird habitats in Utah, and the critical impact of water quality and quantity in ecosystems. These efforts should be strengthened by coordination and collaboration, where appropriate, with the hunting and fishing community. GSLA will continue to promote legislative and budget proposals to address the conservation of birds and other wildlife.

POLICY RESOLUTION: INVASIVE SPECIES

WHEREAS, in arid Utah, essential habitat for wildlife is often found in streamside or riparian ecosystems, whose importance for wildlife cover, migration routes, water, and food is critical because such habitat makes up less than 1 percent of the southwestern landscape.

WHEREAS, these unique and important habitats are being invaded by non-native plants, such as salt cedar and Russian Olive, which are replacing native streamside vegetation and changing ecosystems and waterways. In large areas of west Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and southern California, USGS scientists from the Midcontinent Ecological Science Center have determined that salt cedar is now the dominant riparian species. This change has resulted in loss of biodiversity, degradation of bird habitat, decreased channel conveyance, increased water loss, and loss of recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, non-native, invasive plant and animal species pose a serious threat to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the state of Utah, and have been associated with numerous environmental problems such as degradation of water quality, changing the historic biological makeup of many public and private lands around the state, and resulted in a measurable loss of habitat for native plant and animal species; and

WHEREAS, once established, some invasive species have the ability to displace or replace native plant and animal species, disrupt nutrient and fire cycles, and cause changes in the pattern of plant succession; and

WHEREAS, invasive species represent the second leading cause of bio-diversity loss, are responsible for the majority of bird extinctions since 1800, and threaten species on the Audubon Watch List; and

WHEREAS, these invasive species require significant expenditures by the state and its municipalities to remedy such problems in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, transportation, parks and recreation; and

WHEREAS; Utah has been heavily impacted by invasive plants, due in part to Utah's long history of settlement, ranching and mining; and

WHEREAS, the Jordan River Parkway and its tributaries, as well as other major rivers and streams throughout Utah, are home to many bird and wildlife species that are threatened by the spread of invasive species.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA recommends that state, regional or local governmental Task Forces be formed, and a technical science committee be created, to provide information and advice to such Task Forces; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA encourage such a Task Force to identify best practices for management of invasive species, to address legislative and/or administrative initiatives and to prepare a comprehensive report detailing threats, and identifying remedial action; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports any Federal and State legislation that would address the spread of and damages caused by invasive species; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports regional initiatives which address the local spread of invasive species and will provide technical assistance with these initiatives.

POLICY RESOLUTION: PESTICIDES

WHEREAS, in Utah, and across the United States, the use of lawn care pesticides and herbicides, primarily for aesthetic purposes, has proliferated at an alarming rate, with current research showing that three times more pesticides are applied per acre on household lawns and gardens than to agricultural crops; and

WHEREAS, pesticide use is directly linked to bird mortality, resulting in the deaths of an estimated seven million birds annually from lawn care pesticides, and other environmental and human health problems and concerns; and

WHEREAS, opportunities exist for pesticide reduction using new techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines new technologies with traditional control methods, and which may not adversely impact agricultural output, and significant reductions in pesticide use can save farmers money and help protect the environment; and

WHEREAS, the aesthetic use of pesticides for golf course management, lawn care and landscaping which represents a large percentage of pesticides applied in Utah can be reduced by using the same innovations used in agriculture; and

WHEREAS, some of the chemicals being used to combat West Nile Virus have direct, toxic effects on birds and other wildlife, while others are highly toxic to non-target and beneficial insects, such as butterflies, bees and dragonflies, and to most aquatic life. Rampant spraying of pesticides greatly reduces the numbers of insects available as food to resident birds and the millions of migratory birds that stop in areas that have been sprayed. Run-off and aerial drift of sprayed pesticides contaminates ecosystems distant from the original site of pesticide application making dangers less predictable and controllable; and

WHEREAS, the National Audubon Society is promoting Audubon At Home, an education program on improving the health and value to wildlife of backyard habitats by significantly reducing pesticide use; and

WHEREAS, GSLA strongly supports “neighbor notification” law that allows counties to enact local laws requiring neighbors to be alerted to impending commercial pesticide applications; and

WHEREAS, waste tires are prime breeding areas for mosquitoes , and waste tire stockpiles have become an increasingly serious problem across Utah; and

WHEREAS, Cornell University’s Community IPM program continues to provide important science on pesticides and how best to reduce them, and provides important public education information.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports programs and legislative initiatives designed to significantly reduce the use of pesticides and to implement integrated pest management programs across Utah; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA continues to advocate for counties to adopt local laws consistent with state law for neighbor notification of pesticide applications; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports scientifically based approaches to pesticide spraying issues and alternatives, including considering the impact on non-target species as well as on public health concerns related to pesticide exposure; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA advocates for the discontinuation of the use of pesticides in aerial and ground spraying techniques which cover large areas of land with the attendant risk to human beings and wildlife; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports the exploration of alternative means of establishing disease vector control and response practices; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA, in an effort to reduce the use of pesticides in vector control methods, and to reduce the populations of mosquitoes, advocates for alternative management approaches, including the reduction of waste tire stockpiles in Utah.

IV. HABITAT CONSERVATION

GSLA encompasses many bio-regions. These bio-regions connect bird conservation with science, advocacy and educational efforts to achieve conservation successes:

Great Salt Lake:

Jordan River:

Riparian Habitat

Wasatch Front and Range:

Wasatch , Oquirrh and Uinta Mountains:

West Desert:

Western Basin and Range:

POLICY RESOLUTION: GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

WHEREAS, an array of evidence has been collected by scientists from around the world establishing that the planet's, including Utah's, climate is warming; this data, from diverse sources such as bore holes, melting permafrost, retreating glaciers and the thinning polar ice cap, and territorial shifts being made by plant and animal species, establish that the temperature of our planet has risen about 1 degree F. since the late 19th century, and

WHEREAS, measurements from gases trapped in ice fields have established that primarily CO₂ and, to a lesser extent, other greenhouse gases are now present in our atmosphere in amounts significantly exceeding the levels which have existed during the pre-industrial age, indeed for at least the past 420,000 years, and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of the scientific community is in agreement that the increase in greenhouse gases, and global warming, is due to the steadily increasing use of carbon fuels in the past two centuries, in such technological advances as automobiles, planes, and even more significantly, electricity generated by coal fired power plants, resulting in emission of carbon dioxide gas (CO₂), and

WHEREAS, increases in global temperature by 1.4 to 1.9 degrees centigrade threatens “serious or irreversible damage” to many of the Earth’s human and natural systems, (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Article 3.3), including the migration of plants towards the poles and higher elevations, changes in weather patterns, increases in insect life and increases in tropical and heat related illnesses, and

WHEREAS, the United States, with approximately 4% of the world’s population produces approximately 25% of the world’s carbon dioxide, and

WHEREAS, to lessen the devastating affects upon life on our planet from global warming immediate steps are required to be taken.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports legislation that encourages the use of renewable energy, such as solar, wind and geothermal, and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports implementing Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) currently implemented by seventeen states and D.C., which encourages a percentage of Utah’s power to be derived from renewable sources (see www.utahsmartenergy.org , for an online petition), and be it further,

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports legislation that would improve fuel efficiency and tailpipe emission standards for cars and trucks, and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA urges its members to consider lifestyle changes, whether large or small, conserving their use of energy by choosing to use more efficient electrical or petroleum based machines (i.e. cars, electrical appliances, air conditioning, lights) and by using them less.

Sources: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; 2006 Wallace Stegner Center Symposium, *Global Climate Change: The Artic to the Rocky Mountain West*

POLICY RESOLUTION: SMART GROWTH

WHEREAS, habitat loss and fragmentation are the greatest threat to bird populations, and

WHEREAS, the population of the State of Utah is increasing rapidly, Utah presently being the fifth fastest growing state in the United States, and farmland and open space in migratory flyways and areas of critical habitat for birds is under significant threat of reduction due to development, and

WHEREAS, low density, single-use urban expansion occurring in Utah tends to result in abandoned city cores and compounds fiscal, social and environmental stresses everywhere.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports legislation that would encourage the use of existing infrastructure rather than foster sprawl to preserve agricultural land and other open space resources and enhance urban neighborhoods, traditional cities, villages, existing suburbs and small towns, decrease congestion by providing alternative modes of transportation, by providing various incentives for such smart growth, and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports the general principles underlying comprehensive approaches to smart growth legislation and urges the state and local governments to enact laws and ordinances to such effect; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports the education and collaboration among all interests (i.e. environment, development, farm, legislators, local officials, housing, transportation, school district) to make smart growth work for the future quality of life for all Utahans.

POLICY RESOLUTION: PROTECTING UTAH'S WETLANDS

WHEREAS, regardless of size, wetlands provide essential habitat for many species of migratory waterfowl, for numerous threatened, endangered and species of special concern, such as the Bald Eagle, and for countless other amphibian, avian fish and wildlife species to rest, breed and feed; and

WHEREAS, each individual wetland community is highly intricate, often containing a diverse range of plant and animal species, including rare species; and

WHEREAS, the loss of these vital habitats has been linked to population declines of many amphibian species; and

WHEREAS, wetlands not only provide critical habitats for many plant and animal species, but also provide countless other environmental benefits from flood protection and storm water runoff control, to filtering pollutants, pesticides and sediments from the water; and

WHEREAS, currently the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has the authority to determine water quality, while the federal government (EPA and Army Corp.) has authority to regulate the discharge of fill into wetlands; and

WHEREAS, a 2001 Supreme Court ruling in *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. United States Army Corps of Engineers* limited the federal government's authority to regulate "isolated" wetlands under the Clean Water Act. "Isolated wetlands" are wetlands that are not connected by surface water to navigable waters of the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, many wetlands in Utah therefore may no longer be afforded the same level of protection;

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA strongly urges the state legislature to make passage of legislation protecting isolated wetlands a priority; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports any legislative or administrative measure that will increase state or federal ability to protect and enhance wetlands.

POLICY RESOLUTION: GREAT SALT LAKE

WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake, located in Salt Lake, Tooele, Davis and Box Elder Counties, is a unique saltwater habitat, including areas of freshwater and many adjoining freshwater and saltwater wetlands, and forms a critical habitat for both year round and migratory birds; and

WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake is an important recreational resource used and visited by thousands of people each year for boating, hunting, birding and photography; and supports industries extracting brine shrimp and minerals such as salt and magnesium, and

WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake contributes to the preservation of biodiversity through its diverse habitats, very large size, and wide range of species, and

WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake is a critical habitat for birds in the western United States due to its diverse breeding communities and the enormous number of birds that use it as a migration corridor, and

WHEREAS, the values of this marvelous resource are enhanced by its close proximity to Salt Lake City and the urban areas of the Wasatch front, and

WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake forms the western boundary of one of the fastest growing regions in Utah, and its shoreline, and adjacent open spaces, wetlands and farmlands are subject to increasing pressure from population growth and related commercial and transportation development, and

WHEREAS, this encroaching development threatens the water quality and quantity of Great Salt Lake, the relatively undeveloped nature of its shoreline and the survival of its adjacent ecosystems.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA aggressively supports the long term protection of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem. This shall include but not be limited to:

*Supporting acquisition and preservation of wetland and buffer areas surrounding Great Salt Lake by state conservation agencies, local land trusts and other conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy.

*Encouraging cities and county governments to promote preservation and protection of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem through zoning, planning and other regulatory activities and policies.

*Promoting public understanding of the functions and values of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and its watershed.

*Promoting and advocating for the application of smart growth principles by the applicable government agencies.

POLICY RESOLUTION: JORDAN RIVER ECOSYSTEM

WHEREAS, the Jordan River, connecting Utah Lake with Great Salt Lake, and the recipient of waters from the Wasatch Mountains and the Oquirrh Mountains, as well as the entire Provo River watershed which flows into Utah Lake, and the Jordan River corridor, provides an open space corridor for wildlife as well as recreation for the urban areas through which it flows, and

WHEREAS, riparian habitats make up less than 1% of the Utah landscape, and

WHEREAS, riparian habitats provide food, water and cover in a compact area and thus are the single most important habitat for birds in Utah, and

WHEREAS, the Jordan River and its corridor should provide an invaluable riparian habitat or ecosystem for birds and other wildlife, and

WHEREAS, land which could be a part of the corridor that becomes developed is a lost opportunity to protect and improve the corridor that cannot practically be reversed, and

WHEREAS, the least costly, socially acceptable and most efficient method to improve and maintain the quality of water in the Jordan River is protection of buffer lands and wildlife habitat in and along the corridor, and

WHEREAS, effluent entering the Jordan River is always a threat to the water and wildlife inhabiting or using the corridor.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA advocates and supports land acquisition and conservation easements in the Jordan River riparian corridor, using available state, federal and local sources, as well as non-governmental land trusts and conservation organizations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports full environmental review of all actions which may impact the water quality of the Jordan River.

POLICY RESOLUTION: PROHIBIT the USE of ATVs and ORVs ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS

WHEREAS, the Wasatch National Forest and the Uinta National Forest, the Uinta Wilderness Area, Mt. Olympus Wilderness Area, Twin Peaks Wilderness Area and Lone Peak Wilderness Area, protect the wild, scenic and biologically diverse mountain landscapes (mountain landscapes) for future generations and so represent some of the environmental crown jewels of the Wasatch front and northern Utah; and

WHEREAS, unprotected natural areas, such as the BLM West Desert, and riparian areas along streams, provide other ecological jewels and bio-diversity of immeasurable value (these mountains and unprotected natural areas are collectively referred to as “natural areas”), and

WHEREAS, the use of ‘all terrain vehicles’ (ATVs) or ‘off road vehicles’ (ORVs) is a major threat to the character of these fragile natural areas and will have profound long term adverse impacts on these ecologically sensitive resources; and

WHEREAS, Utah’s natural areas provide important habitats for endangered and threatened species, and are vulnerable to motorized vehicle traffic; and

WHEREAS, the use of motorized vehicles on environmentally sensitive lands, such as the BLM West Desert lands as well as many other natural areas across the state, has been increasing, which is adversely impacting, and leading to increased degradation of these sensitive areas; and

WHEREAS, the sales of ATVs in Utah continue to grow but most are not registered as required by law, and many riders fail to comply with state laws with respect to registration, safety and trespass.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that GSLA’s goal is to restrict ATVs and ORVs use to appropriate designated trails and areas, and only in such natural areas where it is determined that such vehicles will have a minimum impact on wildlife, thus preventing negative impacts on the habitat of birds and all other wildlife and further preserving the qualities of the wilderness experience for this and future generations, and be it further

RESOLVED, that GSLA supports diligent enforcement of laws restricting ATVs and ORVs use.