

The mission of Montana Audubon leads us to interact with policies related to numerous state agencies that have mandates they are obligated to fulfill regarding their management of our public natural resources. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) is the primary agency mandated with managing Montana's native fish and wildlife resources and regulating hunting and fishing seasons. Hunting and fishing regulation is partially controlled by the state's Fish and Wildlife Commission. MTFWP reports to the Environmental Quality Council between legislative years and collaborates with the Department of Agriculture on issues like managing both nuisance wildlife in and around our communities and aspects of the wildlife and domestic livestock interface. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is the primary permitting and regulatory authority over air quality, water quantity, and water quality, including those pertaining to climate change, emissions standards, wetland and riparian areas, environmental pollutants, and much more. Both the DEQ and the Department of Natural Resource Conservation (DNRC) are involved in issues related to permitting activities on state lands, though the DNRC is the primary body, and both report to the Environmental Quality Council and the Energy and Telecommunications Council between legislative years. Often, the Montana Department of Transportation is involved with wetland and riparian habitats under their wetland mitigation and highways programs. The heads of all of Montana's five agencies are representatives on the Montana Sage-grouse Oversight Team (developed in 2015).

In addition to state agency authorities, the Governor retains the authority to govern with the use of executive order, potentially affecting any number of issues related to our mission. Other elected bodies, like the Public Service Commission, Land Board, and County or City Councils and Commissions, oversee important regulatory and wildlife habitat decisions. The Montana Administrative Procedures Act (MAPA) calls for requisite public involvement in agency and other elected body, like the Land board, decisions.

Funding for state agencies primarily occurs during the state's biennial budgeting process, aligned with the biennial state legislative session. In order for most environmental regulations to be executed properly, the corresponding administering agency must be appropriately funded. Beyond administering regulations adequately, agencies need sufficient funding for capital improvements, managing permitting, monitoring projects, technological improvements, and staffing demands.

The policy of Montana Audubon regarding State Agencies, Accountability, & Funding is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the important role state lands play in conserving habitat and wildlife species
- Educate the public and decision makers about how permitted activities on state lands may affect wildlife and wildlife habitat
- Support the ability of conservation easements to be granted in perpetuity on certain state lands to protect against development
- Support the limited development of state lands, including State Parks
- Support the public's ability to recreate on state lands
- Support state land use regulations that provide protection for wetlands, riparian areas, streams, and rivers
- Support state land use regulations, like no "sod-busting," that protect and enhance sagebrush habitat
- Support regulation of the location of gravel pits
- Advocate for continued public participation in State Board of Land Commissioner decisions