MONTANA AUDUBON POLICY

FOSSIL FUELS

Though we recognize the important role energy development plays in contemporary life, transitioning away from fossil fuels, including coal, oil, and natural gas, is crucial in the effort to curb climate change, reduce air and water pollution, and stop large-scale habitat fragmentation and destruction (e.g., strip-mining for coal). Fossil fuel development on public land is especially likely to fragment wildlife habitat and migration corridors, thereby creating predator refuges and limiting or destroying access to otherwise unbroken landscapes; some development occurs near sensitive or slow-to-recover habitats (like sagebrush). Like other large scale land development activities, the development of fossil fuel spreads invasive species, disturbs the landscape throughout wildlife's seasonal cycles, and may disturb animals by producing both noise and vibration. By nature, the intensive disturbance of the landscape that is associated with fossil fuel development typically also causes the land's recovery to be very slow.

However, we also recognize that our transition to renewable energy will not be immediate. Fortunately, at the state and federal level, there are many opportunities for the public to interact with the fossil fuel permitting and extraction industry. This should remain so, and we support decision makers, agencies and private companies putting forth strong planning, monitoring, avoidance, and mitigation policies prior to fossil fuel development, especially on public land.

The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Fossil Fuels is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the impact fossil fuel development has in contributing to climate change, lower air and water quality, and other negative community impacts
- Educate the public and decision makers about the short and long-term impacts fossil fuel development has on wildlife and their habitats
- Encourage developers to avoid, reduce, and mitigate the effects of fossil fuel extraction on fish, wildlife, and their habitats
- Support the role of decision makers in limiting harm to the environment when development does take place, including supporting appropriate bonding and habitat mitigation/protection measures
- Educate managers and decision makers about the importance of proper energy development siting and potential conflict between energy development and certain priority habitat areas, like riparian areas, Important Bird Areas, areas of critical environmental concern, etc.
- Encourage decision makers to require formal, science-based, inventory of wildlife and other natural resources, like natural springs, prior to energy development, monitoring during development, and inventory/monitoring post-development to track effect
- Encourage developers to adopt new technologies and practices that reduce harm to fish, wildlife and their habitat
- Recognize that fossil fuels contribute to our society but climate change necessitates a transition away from these dirt fuel sources