



Rhinoceros Auklet/Andrew A. Reding

Briefing Paper

February 21, 2017

Funding for Food and Habitat for our Birds

SUPPORT Funding for Forage Fish Research in the Operating Budget

SUPPORT HB 1711 and **SB 5546** – Fund Forest Health and Resilience Projects

What's at Stake?

Funding for Forage Fish

Forage fish such as anchovies, sardines, herring, sand lance, and smelt are the bread and butter of the marine world, and yet we know very little about the health of their populations in Washington State. Simple information that tells us how many there are, and where and when they spawn, can help ensure that forage fish – and the many bird, fish, and wildlife populations that rely upon them – can survive into the future. It is critical that we continue to fund forage fish survey research, or we risk the continued decline of marine bird species and other top predators such as salmon and orca whales.

Investing in Resilient Forests

We need resilient forests and watersheds to maintain our state's forest ecology and communities. Uncharacteristic fires, loss of harvestable timber, land use conversion, and climate change all threaten our forests and the wildlife and people that depend on them for habitat, recreation, and livelihood.

It's a Bird Issue

Funding for Forage Fish

Forage fish form a critical link in the marine food chain, providing an energy-rich food source for marine birds such as Rhinoceros Auklets, Tufted Puffins, and Surf Scoters. Over the last 30 years, there has been a dramatic decline in some of our marine bird populations and those that prey on forage fish are at the greatest risk.

Investing in Resilient Forests

Bird species such as the Black-Backed and American Three-toed Woodpecker benefit from prescribed fire regimes that create snags for nesting habitat, while also improving forest health and resilience to catastrophic fire. Already facing many challenges due to climate change, birds such as the Western Tanager, Brown Creeper, and Northern Saw-whet Owl rely on healthy Washington forests to forage, breed, and raise their young.

How We Can Improve Food Resources and Forest Habitat for Birds

Funding for Forage Fish

In 2015, Audubon helped pass a bill – SB 5166 – that funded much needed forage fish research in the Salish Sea. Funding of this legislation supported smelt and sand lance spawning surveys throughout Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and trawl surveys to evaluate the prevalence of all species of forage fish throughout the Sound. We must continue to fund this important research by the Department of Fish & Wildlife so we can better understand the health of our regional forage fish populations. This is a critical step to improve the management of forage fish resources in Washington and ensure lasting populations.

Investing in Resilient Forests

Investments in forest and watershed restoration and community resiliency actions can improve forest health and thereby reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire; protect, restore, and connect habitat for birds and other wildlife; generate economic activity in the forest industry, and store carbon to help mitigate risks associated with climate change.



Wilson's Warbler/
Nickolas Thurston

“For seabirds and other marine species, healthy forage fish stocks are a key component necessary for thriving populations.”

- Audubon WA Director of Bird Conservation Dr. Trina Bayard

**ACTION: SUPPORT funding for forage fish research in the Operating Budget
Vote YES on HB 1711 and SB 5546**

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