



Audubon WASHINGTON



Wood Duck/Mick Thompson

Briefing Paper

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Water for Birds and People

OPPOSE HB 1885 and SB 5239 – Protect Washington’s Water Resources for Birds and People

What’s at Stake?

The protection of Washington’s water resources is under threat. HB 1885 and SB 5239 are designed to overturn a recent State Supreme Court decision that protects the amount of water flowing in a stream (Whatcom County v. Hirst). This rule ensures the protection of habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife, as well as for livestock watering and human recreation. The court was clear: when developers build new subdivisions that rely on wells to supply water, they must make sure the new wells do not impact existing homes or nearby streams. Across our state, water resources are under significant stress due to climate change and increased population growth. Until recently, new development dependent on wells

as a water supply has been almost completely unregulated. Many existing wells are running dry, streams are reaching temperatures deadly to fish and other species, or simply disappearing.

It's a Bird Issue

Water quantity and water quality are critical to birds' survival. Birds need water for a variety of uses, including drinking, cleaning, habitat, food, safety, and rearing young. Already threatened by loss of habitat and climate change, species such as the American Dipper, Marsh Wren, and even the Mallard duck are highly susceptible to decreases in water availability. Without access to clean, abundant water sources, their populations are likely to be further stressed and suppressed.

Recent low snow-packs and increasingly intense summer droughts create management challenges where homes, agriculture, and wildlife all compete for the dwindling water resources that sustain them. In our quickly changing environment, we must make sure birds, wildlife, agriculture, livestock, and people all have enough water in the future.

How We Can Ensure Water for Birds and People

Audubon supports responsible water-management decisions that protect habitat for birds and ensure clean water supplies for established and developing communities. We work in the field to restore habitat along streams, rivers, and wetlands so that birds, other wildlife, and recreationists can live and enjoy clean water sources that sustain healthy, native vegetation. Through field trips and programs, we educate our communities about the importance of protecting Washington's water resources, and encourage water reuse and conservation, especially in an increasingly climate challenged world. We seek to balance the needs of birds, people, and economies by safeguarding groundwater resources and protecting critical aquatic habitat.

Developers are demanding that the Supreme Court decision be reversed and development allowed to move forward **regardless of its impact on habitat, farms or households**. Our birds, salmon and other wildlife that depend upon our water resources deserve consideration, too.



Belted Kingfisher/Mick Thompson

"Fish and wildlife are protected by planning for growth in a way that protects the instream flows needed to maintain their habitats. Consumers are protected because new lots and new homes must have a legal supply of water the buyers can rely on long-term."

—Chris Wierzbicki, *Futurewise Interim Executive Director*

ACTION: Vote NO on HB 1885 and SB 5239

Gail Gatton, VP & Executive Director
(206) 652-2444 x101 | ggatton@audubon.org