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Washington, DC 20515-0512

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
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The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
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House Transportation & Infrastructure  
Committee  
2134 Rayburn House Office Building  
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The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
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The Honorable Frank Pallone  
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House Energy & Commerce Committee  
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The Honorable Greg Walden  
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The Honorable Richard Neal  
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The Honorable Kevin Brady  
Ranking Member  
House Ways & Means Committee  
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The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva  
Chairman  
House Natural Resources Committee  
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The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Ranking Member  
House Natural Resources Committee  
123 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2020

**Re: House Moving Forward Act**

Dear House leadership:

On behalf of the National Audubon Society and its more than 1.7 million members, we are writing to thank you for your leadership in advancing the House Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2) to support important infrastructure investments, including funding to increase the resiliency and sustainability of critical infrastructure systems and to restore natural landscapes. We specifically applaud the bill's call for investments in programs to encourage and fund green- and nature-based solutions for reducing stormwater pollution and protecting vulnerable infrastructure

systems, and investments to expand clean energy to reduce carbon pollution from critical sectors like transportation, buildings, and electricity. Investments like those outlined in the Moving Forward Act will not only help create jobs for the millions of people that have been affected by the economic crisis created by COVID-19, but it will also provide much-needed funding to support “climate smart” and equitable investments in critical infrastructure systems. Additionally, we express our strong support for the Quigley amendment (#12) that would advance bird-friendly practices in federal buildings, and we encourage its adoption as part of the Moving Forward Act.

Critical infrastructure systems are both a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and also face threats from climate impacts. Together, transportation and electricity systems contribute more than half of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup> and large-scale investments are needed to rapidly decarbonize both sectors to avoid catastrophic impacts to communities, ecosystems, and wildlife. Audubon’s recently published Survival by Degrees Report demonstrates the significant threat that unmitigated climate change presents to birds, showing that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk of extinction at 3°C of warming.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, communities across the U.S. are already experiencing significant and costly impacts as a result of infrastructure failures due to the effects of climate change, including rising seas, more intense coastal storms, extreme rainfall events, and more intense and prolonged heatwaves. In 2012, Hurricane Sandy flooded electric substations, causing more than 8 million people to lose power; damaged wastewater treatment facilities, causing the release of millions of gallons of untreated wastewater into local waterways; and inundated tunnels and transit stations throughout New York City, causing billions of dollars in damages to the region’s transportation system and prolonged closures of major transportation arteries. Risks to infrastructure systems will continue to increase as the climate changes. According to the 2018 National Climate Assessment, estimated damages to roads alone could reach \$20 billion per year by 2090 under a high emissions scenario and an estimated \$655 million is needed to simply upgrade water systems to address water quality over the next two decades.

Audubon also specifically supports the bill’s emphasis on natural and nature-based solutions. Natural infrastructure can provide a more cost-effective solution for managing stormwater, protecting coastal communities from more frequent and severe storms, and recharging groundwater aquifers in arid environments. For example, NOAA estimates that natural infrastructure solutions provide more than \$23 billion in storm protection services every year,<sup>3</sup> while also delivering other environmental benefits, such as improved air and water quality, and habitats for birds and other wildlife. Additionally, investments in natural infrastructure will contribute to the growing restoration economy and create jobs that cannot be outsourced. Economists estimate that the U.S. restoration economy generated almost \$25 billion in economic output and supported more than 221,000 jobs in 2014 alone; these restoration jobs also generated labor income of over \$75,000 on average per job and primarily benefitted low-income and rural communities that have been hard hit by the current COVID-19 crisis.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions,” <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

<sup>2</sup> National Audubon Society, Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink, <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees>.

<sup>3</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, “Fast Facts: Natural Infrastructure.” Undated. <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/natural-infrastructure.html>

<sup>4</sup> Todd BenDor, et al., “Estimating the Size and Impact of the Ecological Restoration Economy” (Jun. 2015), <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0128339>.

Specifically, Audubon supports the following provisions in the Moving Forward Act that will support efforts to enhance the resilience and sustainability of critical infrastructure systems and protect and restore important ecosystems:

- **Transportation.** Audubon supports the bill's inclusion of the INVEST Act, which would increase funding for surface transportation and direct much-needed investments to enhance the resilience and sustainability of transportation systems, deploy natural infrastructure solutions, and increase funding for cleaner alternative modes of transportation, like transit, bicycling, and walking. Specifically, Audubon supports:
  - Amendments to the National Highway Performance Program (Sec. 1201), Surface Transportation Program (Sec. 1205), and Bridge Investment Program (Sec. 1207), to require consideration of climate impacts and greenhouse gas emissions and authorize funding for resilience and carbon reduction projects, including natural infrastructure solutions, electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, and multimodal projects to increase access to cleaner transportation options.
  - The creation of a new pre-disaster mitigation program to provide critical funding to enhance the resilience of transportation systems before disasters strike (Sec. 1202) and amendments to the Emergency Relief program to specifically authorize projects to enhance the resilience of transportation assets, including natural infrastructure solutions, during disaster rebuilding (Sec. 1203).
  - Provisions requiring the development of performance-based standards and consideration of greenhouse gas emissions, climate impacts, housing, land use, and equity in state and regional transportation plans and improvement programs (Secs. 1401-1403 and 2107-2108).
  - Provisions funding the development of a robust network of alternative fuel charging stations—including EV charging—along highway corridors to enable uptake of important new low-carbon vehicle technologies (Secs. 1303 and 1211).
  - The creation of new programs to support investments to reduce carbon pollution from the transportation sector, increase access to transit and rail, reduce congestion, and deliver other environmental and resilience benefits with a focus on areas of persistent poverty, including funding for Community Climate Innovations Grants (Sec. 1304), projects of regional and national significance (Sec. 1301), the Carbon Pollution Reduction Program (Sec. 1212), the alternative vehicles charging grants program (Sec. 1303), the Gridlock Reduction Grant Program (Sec. 1306), Zero Emission Bus Grants (Sec. 2403), set-asides for low-income transit riders (Secs. 2501-2503), Vehicle Miles Traveled pilots (Secs. 5401-5202), Clean School Bus Program (Sec. 33311), and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and planning (Secs. 33332-33342).
  - Funding to expand, modernize and enhance the resilience of rail service, including high speed rail (Secs. 9102, 9106, and 9215).
  - Funding to reduce carbon pollution from airports (Sec. 10102) and ports (Secs. 25001-25003).
  - Funding for programs to advance complete streets and green infrastructure to increase safe and efficient movement for pedestrians and bicyclists and reduce stormwater pollution, including provisions calling for the development of complete street standards (Sec. 1107), creation of a new active transportation connectivity grant program (Sec. 1309), and funding for a Transportation Research Board (TRB) study on stormwater management best practices for transportation agencies.

- Funding for research to enhance the climate resilience of transportation systems and to reduce emissions from the transportation sector, including a TRB study on the resilience of transportation systems (Sec. 1621), studies to address inundated and submerged roads (Sec. 1628), and studies on strategies to reduce GHG emissions from materials (Secs. 5102 and 5202).
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Projects that prioritize ecological restoration and natural infrastructure solutions.** Audubon supports the bill's investments in previously authorized U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects that can be constructed with a new influx of funding (Division F, Title I). Audubon specifically supports funding for environmental infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects that make up a key part of the Army Corps' mission and will provide ecological benefits and help support local economies (Sec. 21004).
- **Water quality and water supply.** Audubon also supports measures to fund natural and nature-based solutions for improving water quality and addressing drought, including:
  - Funding for State Revolving Funds to support investments to improve water quality and provisions requiring a 15 percent green-reserve set aside, to support green infrastructure and water and energy efficiency projects (Sec. 22109).
  - Authorization and funding to provide grants to address nonpoint sources of water pollution (Sec. 22201).
  - Amendments to the Clean Water Act to authorize grants to address climate risks to wastewater utilities (Sec. 22104), to support alternative water source projects (Sec. 22105), and to address stormwater overflows (Sec. 22106).
  - Funding for western water infrastructure and drought resiliency measures, including multi-benefit water storage and water reuse and recycling (Secs. 81201-81252), for water conservation and efficiency measures (Secs. 81301-81335), and for groundwater planning, conservation, and aquifer recharge (Secs. 81301-81335).
  - Funding for Tribal water infrastructure (Secs. 81611-81612) and provisions related to the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement (Secs. 81711-81721), which supports urgently needed water supply for Tribal nations that have been discriminated against in the context of the water rights system. Similarly, Audubon supports Sec. 81101 which makes the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund permanent.
- **Ecosystem restoration and recreational access.** Audubon supports provisions in the bill that would support environmentally beneficial restoration and recreational access projects, including:
  - Reauthorization and funding to restore nationally important watersheds, including the Chesapeake Bay Program (Sec. 22301), the San Francisco Bay Restoration Grant Program (Sec. 22302), the Puget Sound Coordinated Recovery (Sec. 22303), the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) (Sec. 22304), the National Estuary Program (NEP) (Sec. 22305), the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program (Sec. 22306), the Long Island Sound Program (Sec. 22307), and the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program (Sec. 22308). These watersheds provide important ecosystem services, create habitats for birds and other wildlife, support economically important fisheries, and generate billions of dollars in tourism revenues for the country. These watersheds and the ecosystem services they provide also face significant threats from climate impacts such as sea level rise, warming water temperatures, and acidification. Funding to restore, enhance, and

address climate impacts to these vital aquatic ecosystems is imperative for wildlife, the environment, and the economy. We support both the funding for these programs and the reauthorization of the GLRI and the NEP.

- Funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to support shovel-ready coastal resiliency projects to restore habitat for fish and wildlife, help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change, and address the economic impacts from COVID-19 on fisheries (Sec. 83101) and funding to implement living shoreline projects, with priority for under-resourced communities (Sec. 83102).
  - Guaranteed funding to increase access to greenspace and develop recreational infrastructure in park-poor urban areas in underserved communities, through the Outdoors for All provisions (Secs. 88201-82206).
- **Renewable energy and energy efficiency.** Audubon also supports provisions in the bill to build out renewable and clean energy sources, modernize electric grid infrastructure, and increase the energy efficiency of buildings. All of these investments will be critical to meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals. Renewable energy should be sited to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to birds and the places they need. Supporting renewable energy and energy efficiency is also important for driving economic growth and creating local jobs. Over the last decade, the clean energy industry has driven significant job growth in all 50 states. Many of these jobs were lost due to the COVID-19 crisis,<sup>5</sup> but investment in this industry could bring jobs back and create new employment opportunities that strengthen the economy going forward. Specifically, Audubon supports the following provisions in the Moving Forward Act:
    - Investments to modernize, and enhance the resiliency, performance, and efficiency of the electricity grid and to support investments in energy storage (Secs. 33111-33116). Modernization of the electric grid, including through the integration of more energy storage, will be important for integrating more renewable energy and increasing the efficiency and resilience of the grid.
    - Creation of a program and funding to increase access to solar in low-income and underserved communities, including investments in community solar (Sec. 33131).
    - Creation of a Cities, Counties and Communities (3C) energy program to provide technical assistance and competitive grants to advance clean energy solutions at the local level (Sec. 33141).
    - Investments to weatherize, increase the energy efficiency of buildings, and to deploy renewable energy power sources on buildings, public facilities, and affordable housing (Secs. 33202, 33211, 33221-33222, 33231, 33241, 33251, 60003-60004, 60006-60013).
    - Provisions to promote renewable energy projects in priority areas on public lands and the creation of a new Renewable Energy Resource Conservation Fund (Secs. 84401-84412).
    - Programs to support offshore wind development, which should be sited to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to birds (Sec. 84501).
    - Multi-year extensions of tax credits to support renewable and clean energy projects and projects to support low- and zero-emissions vehicles (Secs. 90401-90109, 90401-90406, 90421-90425, 90431-90436).

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<sup>5</sup> <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Clean-Energy-Jobs-May-COVID-19-Memo-Final.pdf>

- **Hazard Mitigation.** Audubon supports provisions that would provide grants to capitalize hazard mitigation revolving loan funds to fund projects to reduce climate-risks in communities (Secs. 23001-23001). The National Institute of Building Sciences estimates that every dollar spent on hazard mitigation saves \$6. This program will provide much needed financing to help communities reduce risks before disasters strike and to pursue regional approaches for enhancing resilience, including by updating land-use codes that preserve natural floodplains, establish wildfire buffers between forests and development, and deploy natural- and green-infrastructure approaches.
- **Carbon capture and sequestration.** Audubon supports the continued research, development, and deployment of carbon removal and utilization technology that may be critical for reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century, and the extension of the Section 45Q tax credit to incentivize that work.
- **Public Lands.** Audubon also supports provisions in the bill that would make important investments to remediate contamination and increase recreational access on public lands. Specifically, Audubon supports the following measures in the Moving Forward Act:
  - The establishment of an Orphan Well Remediation Program to provide funding to properly close and remediate orphaned oil and gas wells, including restoring native species habitat, on Federal, tribal, state, and private lands (Sec. 84101) and increasing the amount of financial assurances required of companies drilling on Federal land to ensure sufficient revenue streams to close and remediate wells in the future (Sec. 84102).
  - Reauthorization and funding for the Abandoned Mine Land program to accelerate cleanup of abandoned coal mines (Secs. 84201-84305) and funding to enable third parties to clean up streams and watersheds impacted by abandoned mines (Secs. 84601-84604).
  - Funding for the Forest Service's Legacy Roads and Trails Program to address the harmful effects that roads can have on watersheds, water supplies and wildlife habitat, through maintenance, improving fish passage, and decommissioning environmentally hazardous roads (Sec. 82401).
  - Protection of wildlife corridors and wildlife habitat connectivity through the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act to create a National Wildlife Corridors System to provide for the protection and restoration of certain native fish, wildlife, and plant species on Federal lands and waters and a Tribal Wildlife Corridors System, as well as a voluntary grant program for restoration, maintenance, and preservation of wildlife corridors on State and private lands (Secs. 83201 – 83341).

By supporting investments to enhance the resilience and sustainability of both infrastructure systems and important natural landscapes, Congress can help states and communities reduce their vulnerability to costly and destructive acts of nature while preserving and protecting ecosystems that are important to birds and other species. The measures above would help communities and states reduce pollution from the transportation and electric sectors, plan for future risks to infrastructure, and employ nature-based methods to reduce flood and storm damages to important infrastructure systems. These programs will provide multiple benefits at the federal, state, and local levels, including saving taxpayer dollars by avoiding disaster-related expenditures, enhancing public safety, and providing environmental benefits.

On behalf of the National Audubon Society's more than 1.7 million members, we thank you for your leadership in advancing this bill that will make important investments to "future proof" our country's infrastructure in ways that will create jobs, and deliver environmental benefits for both communities and birds and the places they need. Please consider us a trusted resource moving forward on this and other issues where healthy communities, economies, and wildlife can overlap.

Sincerely,

Sarah Greenberger  
Senior Vice President, Conservation Policy  
National Audubon Society