

Dear Chairman Soliday, Chairman Koch, and Members of the 21st Century Energy Policy Development Task Force,

Audubon Great Lakes, a regional office of National Audubon Society, has more than 27,000 members across Indiana, including 11 chapter affiliates. On behalf of our supporters, we are writing to urge you to take bipartisan action to move our state toward achieving net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050.

While our core mission is ensuring a safe habitat for the state's bird population, we also recognize that a multi-faceted plan to move toward a carbon-free future will bring benefits to all corners of our state and all who call it home, especially those in rural areas where agriculture is a primary economic driver. We are grateful for this Task Force and the work of its members to protect Hoosiers, improve Indiana's environmental landscape, and prepare us for generations to come.

Bipartisan clean energy solutions are a win-win for Indiana – especially our farmers. Common sense solutions, such as the creation of a voluntary carbon credit market, can provide them with the tools and resources they need to maintain their land in a way that supports conservation and improves working lands' ability to capture and store carbon naturally.

Audubon also strongly supports renewable energy—including solar, wind, and geothermal power—that is properly sited in ways that avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts on birds and other wildlife. We also believe Hoosiers should be able to generate their own energy at home and receive a fair market rate credit for what they return to the grid. This promotes energy independence and reduces reliance on fossil fuels. Adopting renewable energy is critical to reducing pollution, lowering global temperatures, and preserving the places that birds need to survive.

A recent report by the National Audubon Society, [Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink](#), finds that [two-thirds](#) of North America's birds are vulnerable to extinction. The good news is that if we take immediate action to reduce emissions and slow global temperature rises, we can protect the majority of birds at-risk.

This fall, more than 20,000 Sandhill Cranes will descend on Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area, in Medaryville, Indiana, a key stopover site for eastern populations during their migration. Audubon's science finds that if global temperatures rise by 3 degrees, most Sandhill Cranes will be pushed north and out of the conterminous 48 states during the breeding season to find favorable homes. Sandhill Cranes are

believed to have existed for more than 2.5 million years in their present form. Reducing carbon emissions to halt warming temperatures will help ensure the survival of one of the oldest living bird species on our planet.

And it's not just Sandhill Cranes that will benefit. Indiana supports over 208 bird species, including 14 high-vulnerability species like the Scarlet Tanager and Cerulean Warbler, and Jasper-Pulaski is just one of 41 Important Bird Area sites across Indiana that is recognized for providing critical habitat that bird species need to survive.

The numbers show that protecting birds is good for business. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service found that bird watchers across the U.S. spend nearly \$41 billion annually on trips and equipment. Local community economies benefit from the \$14.9 billion that bird watchers spend on food, lodging and transportation. In addition, birds serve as important pollinators for our agricultural industry.

Through bipartisan clean-energy solutions, voluntary carbon-credit markets, and properly sited renewable energy projects, we can protect Hoosiers, improve Indiana's environmental landscape, and create lasting protections for birds and the places they need. The National Audubon Society looks forward to working with this committee to find bipartisan solutions that recognize the vital role our farms, ranchers, and private landowners play in protecting our wildlife and birds while improving health and the environment in Indiana.

Sincerely,

Adam Forrer
Director, Policy
Audubon Great Lakes