



June 18, 2014

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
ATTN: Laurie Vigue, Wildlife Area Assistant Section Manager
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501

RE: Project 14-1097 A – Riparian Protection Funding of Reardan Audubon Lake –Phase 2

Dear Ms. Vigue:

We are writing in **support of the acquisition of an additional 150 acres of sensitive riparian buffer to the Reardan Audubon Lake area** currently under consideration by the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. Audubon Washington is an organization dedicated to the protection of birds and their habitats. We have 25 active chapters here in Washington, representing over 21,000 members. Spokane Audubon, our local chapter in the Reardan Audubon Lake area, led a statewide effort to raise funds for acquisition of the original property. All of our chapters contributed funds during that Phase 1 campaign, a sign of the importance of this area to our local and migratory bird populations.

The Reardan Audubon Lake 2014 proposed acquisition is a **contiguous 150 acres of biscuit and swale prairies containing vernal pools, several permanent ponds and associated riparian areas**. It lies on the east boundary of the state-owned Reardan Audubon Lake Wildlife Area, a 277-acre complex just north of the town of Reardan that is managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). When combined, the propose acquisition and the current wildlife area form the headwaters of Crab Creek, a Columbia River tributary and Deep Creek, a Spokane River tributary. The site includes eleven Priority Habitat Species, five state candidate species, two Federal candidate species, and five WDFW habitat types or elements of special concern. It is used by over 125 species of birds and during spring migration **provides critical resting and feeding area for birds** journeying north to breeding grounds in Canada and the Arctic. Indeed, it is **the last stop before the Canadian wetlands**.

Wildlife viewing is the primary recreation at this site. Reardan Audubon Lake – Phase I is a popular stop on the *Palouse to Pines Loop* of the Great Washington State Birding Trail which we developed in partnership with WDFW. **Phase 2 would add important structural diversity to the wildlife area complex**. This project would help meet the Washington State Legislature's directive to develop wildlife viewing sites near rural communities. The Phase 2 parcel, just 20 miles from the City of Spokane, is on the market to be subdivided and developed. **Acquisition now is essential to protect these 150 acres from development and the adjacent wildlife area from associated degradation**.

We respectfully request that WDFW and the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board rate the acquisition of this property as a high priority and award funding of \$600,000 in the 2013-2015 biennium budget.

Sincerely,



Gail Gatton
Executive Director



Todd Burley, Chair
Board of Directors

CC: Mike Atamian, Region 1 Biologist
Lindell Haggin, Spokane Audubon Society