
Colorado's Legislature's End of Session Report

Prepared for Audubon Rockies and the Audubon Colorado Council
May 27, 2025

I. SESSION OVERVIEW

The First Regular Session of the 75th Colorado General Assembly met between January 8 and May 7. During the 2025 legislative session, staff at [Siegel and Long Public Affairs](#) engaged with partners, agencies, and legislators, strategically working to advance, improve, or oppose bills as guided by [Audubon Rockies](#) and the Public Policy Committee of the [Audubon Colorado Council](#). The Second Regular Session of the 75th Colorado General Assembly will convene on January 14, 2026.

The state legislative session unfolded against a backdrop of significant fiscal challenges, with a projected \$1.2 billion budget shortfall. Despite these constraints, lawmakers passed several bills aimed at enhancing environmental protections. Senate Bill 25-168 strengthened the state's efforts against illegal wildlife trafficking by expanding protections and increasing penalties for violations. House Bill 25-1113 addressed water conservation by limiting the use of nonfunctional turf in new residential developments, promoting drought-resistant landscaping. Additionally, Senate Bill 25-049 continued the Wildlife Habitat Stamp Program, ensuring ongoing funding for habitat conservation projects. These legislative actions reflect Colorado's commitment to preserving its natural resources and biodiversity.

However, the session was not without its shortcomings. Despite the passage of several environmental bills, some critics argue that the legislature did not go far enough in addressing pressing climate issues. For instance, while there were efforts to enhance outdoor recreation management through House Bill 25-1323, the bill was ultimately postponed indefinitely due to concerns from agricultural and water rights stakeholders. Furthermore, the legislature faced criticism for not taking more aggressive action to counteract federal rollbacks on environmental protections. While the 2025 session saw progress in certain areas, more comprehensive conservation measures are needed to fully address the environmental challenges facing Colorado.

On March 12, Becky Long and Melissa Ordelheide presented a suite of bills that Audubon was focusing on during this legislative session. This annual webinar, Getting Green Laws, is hosted by Audubon Rockies, Denver Audubon and the nine other chapters in the Audubon CO Council, and the Colorado Field Ornithologists. This free webinar was geared towards Coloradans who want to learn how they can make their voices heard by state legislators on timely environmental bills being considered during this legislative session.

Ila. PRIORITY BILLS

Senate Bill 049 – Continuing Wildlife Habitat Stamp Program

Audubon Position: Support

Outcome: Passed - Signed by the Governor on May 15

Sponsors: Senators Marchman and Roberts & Representatives Martinez and Winter: This bill continues Colorado's Wildlife Habitat Stamp Program beyond its previously scheduled sunset of July 1, 2027, by removing the program's expiration provisions and eliminating the mandated sunset review. Under the program, individuals applying for hunting or fishing licenses must purchase the stamp. The funds raised, about \$7.9 million annually, support wildlife habitat preservation and public access through conservation easements and habitat enhancement projects. The bill passed both chambers with strong bipartisan support, extending the program indefinitely.

House Bill 1040 - Adding Nuclear Energy as a Clean Energy Resource

Audubon Position: Oppose

Outcome: Passed - Signed by the Governor on March 31

Sponsors: Representatives Valdez and Winter & Senators Roberts and Liston: This bill adds nuclear projects to energy resources considered as clean energy in Colorado State statute and may be used to help utilities meet clean energy standards. The bill was opposed by conservation organizations and community organizations and supported by tech companies, labor organizations and utilities.

Audubon joined the opposition due to concerns about nuclear waste, the amount of water that nuclear uses, and potential health risks.

House Bill 1113 - Limit Turf in New Residential Development

Audubon Position: Support

Outcome: Passed - Signed by the Governor on May 20

Sponsors: Representatives McCormick & Smith and Senator Roberts: This bill aims to promote water conservation by restricting the use of nonfunctional turf in new residential projects; it encourages the replacement of water-intensive, ecologically barren grass with native, drought-tolerant landscaping that can provide food, shelter, and nesting habitat for birds. Building upon prior legislation, the bill mandates that, starting January 1, 2028, local governments prohibit the installation of nonfunctional turf, artificial turf, or invasive plant species in new multifamily housing such as apartments and condominiums. By January 1, 2028, local entities are required to enact ordinances limiting turf installation in all new residential developments. The bill also protects the planting of urban trees, which are critical for migratory stopover habitat, shade, and insect life. By shifting toward more bird- and climate-friendly landscapes, this law supports healthier ecosystems right where we live.

Of note, during the 2024 session, a similar bill was passed that was focused on local governments. This 2025 bill was a win for conservation in communities across Colorado.

- [Bill fact sheet](#)

Senate Bill 168 - Prevention of Wildlife Trafficking

Audubon Position: Support

Outcome: Passed - Signed by the Governor on June 2

Sponsors: Senators Roberts & Bright and Representatives Espenosa & Armagost: This bill strengthens protections against illegal wildlife trafficking by expanding the list of protected species to include those under international endangered species agreements (Appendix I to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES). It establishes stricter penalties for trafficking violations, with more severe consequences for high-value or endangered species. The bill also allows for the suspension of licenses for convicted individuals and directs the Division of Parks and Wildlife to improve enforcement and data collection. Overall, it aims to better protect Colorado's wildlife and support global conservation efforts.

- [Bill fact sheet](#)

House Bill 1292 - Transmission Lines in State High Rights-of-Way

Audubon Position: Support

Outcome: Passed - Governor Signed on May 8

Sponsors: Representatives Boesenecker & Joseph and Senator Winter: This bill allows high voltage transmission lines to be co-located along state highway rights-of-way, following a rulemaking process by the Colorado Department of Transportation. Starting in 2027, transmission developers must publicly post route analyses, including economic, engineering, and reliability factors, and show they prioritized existing utility corridors and rights-of-way over new corridors. While developers aren't required to choose a particular route, if they use the state highway right-of-way the developer will compensate the state either through public-private partnerships or a surcharge. The Colorado Electric Transmission Authority is also tasked with studying highway corridors to identify suitable routes for future transmission development. The bill passed with bipartisan support in both chambers.

Audubon Rockies was part of a coalition of organizations that worked together to get this passed, in hopes of minimizing impacts of transmission line development in Colorado.

- [Bill fact sheet](#)

House Bill 1323 - Division of Parks & Wildlife Outdoor Recreation

Audubon Position: Support

Outcome: Passed - Bill died in first committee

Sponsors: Representatives Lukens & Taggart and Senator Roberts: This bill aimed to enhance outdoor recreation management by designating the Division of Parks and Wildlife as the lead agency for planning and infrastructure development across the state. The bill proposed creating a statewide river recreation program to improve safety, access, and conservation, and called for the establishment of both motorized and nonmotorized trail systems. It emphasized collaboration with federal, tribal, and local partners to develop regional plans that balance outdoor recreation with conservation goals. However, concerns from agricultural and water rights stakeholders led to the bill being postponed indefinitely in committee on April 14, 2025. Proponents plan to revisit the proposal in future legislative sessions after further stakeholder engagement.

- [Bill fact sheet](#)

Senate Joint Resolution 009 - Concerning Protection of Colorado's Public Lands

Audubon Position: Support

Outcome: Passed bipartisan through both chambers and sent to the President and the Colorado Congressional Delegation

Sponsors: Senators Roberts & Catlin and Representatives McCluskie & Taggart: This bipartisan resolution reaffirms the state's commitment to preserving its public lands under federal stewardship. Passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, the resolution opposes any federal efforts to sell, transfer, or privatize Colorado's public lands, which encompass over 22 million acres managed by agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. These lands are vital for providing clean air and water, supporting wildlife habitats, and offering recreational opportunities that contribute significantly to Colorado's economy and cultural heritage. The resolution also encourages state officials and Colorado's congressional delegation to advocate for the protection of these lands, ensuring they remain accessible and preserved for future generations.

While this resolution has no regulatory powers, it is a strong statement on a high profile public policy issue that has major impacts to Colorado.

IIb. OTHER BILLS

[ACC took positions](#), tracked and engaged on over 35 bills related to wildlife, wildfire, water, conservation and more. We were pleased to share Audubon's position with legislators and provide bi-weekly updates to ACC on the bills they were tracking. Additionally, we worked to connect Audubon with partners on other key bills and to facilitate engagement on bills we supported.

III. LOOKING AHEAD

We expect to see continued conversation related to river recreation and right to float. Certainly some form of HB25-1323 will come back next session.

[A bill that would have raised additional funding for wildlife crossings](#) by placing a small fee on auto insurance died this session due to ongoing concerns about fees to consumers. This will continue to be an ongoing conversation in order to find a workable solution.

Budget challenges will continue into the next year - and potentially sooner with conversations looming about a special session on the budget.

We will need to continue to engage to protect funding for important programs.

Concerns continue to rise about severance tax - small amounts were taken this year to balance the budget and it's important to preserve funding for water and conservation projects.

Additionally, the Water Resources and Agriculture Review Committee will begin meeting over the interim. [Dates for that committee are posted here.](#)