

## Smart Growth Legislative Update

By Sean Mahar

LAST YEAR, TWO BILLS were introduced into the legislature on Smart Growth, the *Smart Growth for a New Century Act* sponsored by Assemblyman Thomas DiNapoli and Senator Kenneth Lavalle, and the *Quality Communities Act* sponsored by Senator Mary Lou Rath and Assemblyman Sam Hoyt. Both of these initiatives complement Governor George Pataki's sustainable development themes established by the Quality Communities Task Force. Each of these legislative proposals focus on providing assistance to local governments and communities in an effort to support good land use planning.

These legislative initiatives would require communities to develop plans that would promote innovative Smart Growth practices by localities. The focus of the plans is to promote sustainable development and appropriate economic growth while protecting the environment. Sustainable development activities could range from emphasizing development on brownfields (vacant or abandoned industrial and commercial areas), to promoting main street revitalization, to providing farmland protection programs, and to promoting the purchase of conservation easements or fee title (mechanisms to protect open space). These approaches would benefit from the use of existing infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, water, sewers, and proximity to other enterprises and population centers. It is important that new initiatives are adopted that provide for environmental protection while building a strong economy. These themes can go hand in hand in creating a sustainable future.

The legislative proposals currently pending provide the framework for New York State to build upon its Smart Growth policies. The chances of passage by the legislature may be enhanced, if these proposals could be put in one comprehensive package endorsed by both political parties in both houses of the legislature. The Smart Growth working group, a coalition of environmental, business, development, farming, local governments, and academic groups organized by Audubon New York, is meeting in February to discuss this issue and other legislative strategies. From these discussions Audubon hopes that the broad-based coalition created through our smart growth program and historic conferences can agree to a consensus approach for a legislative package in the New York State legislature.

Audubon New York will work with the sponsors of these bills in hopes to reach a common strategy and program to be introduced in 2003. Legislation is needed this year to put New York on track as a National Smart Growth leader. Audubon New York will put the Smart Growth/Quality Communities agenda forward as our number one legislative priority in 2003.

Audubon New York encourages you to join our advocate network so we can keep you up-to-date on new developments on this important issue.

## Council Approves New Conservation Policy Resolution Process

By Carole Nemore

AT THE FALL 2002 semi-annual meeting of the Audubon Council, a process to update and streamline the conservation policy resolution process was approved unanimously by the Council. This action was taken to improve our effectiveness with policy makers. Each year a *Conservation Policy Resolutions* booklet is used to inform policy makers in the Congress, state legislature, and both federal and state executive agencies as to our priorities and positions on conservation issues central to our mission. The booklet currently contains nearly 40 resolutions. We realized that the resolutions would have more impact on decision-makers if the list were more succinct and relevant to decisions or actions to be taken in the coming year.

The booklet is also shared with all chapters so that our conservation work can be better coordinated at a state-wide grassroots level. As importantly, the advocacy and program work of Audubon New York for the ensuing year is guided by the resolutions. For

example, the KeySpan property was a priority resolution in 2002.

In a formal review process, both the chapters and staff have undertaken the task to eliminate outdated resolutions, remove duplicative provisions, and recognize ongoing longstanding commitments that do not require annual resolutions. We have applied three criteria to analyze existing and new resolutions to substantially lower the number of policy resolutions for 2003 – 1. Relevancy to our mission and strategic plan; 2. Having statewide or bioregional significance; and 3. Requiring state or federal government action in the coming year.

Each spring, the Audubon Council, composed of representatives of all 30 Audubon chapters throughout the state, adopt the conservation policy resolutions. We urge Audubon members to attend the Spring Audubon Council meeting and have your say! For more information, contact Daphne Lumpkin at (518) 869-9731.

## Forestry/Education Program Launched In 2003

By Graham Cox

A BROAD-BASED PARTNERSHIP of forest interests — including conservation and industry groups, forest land owners, state forestry officials and academic institutions — has announced their intention to work together in New York State to share and promote research data showing the links between wildlife populations and different forest management practices.

The members have described the statewide partnership as “unique” and unusual among such diverse interest groups. The potential impact of the partnership on forest stewardship they consider significant and the collaborative investment of the partners in the process is heralded as unparalleled in New York.

The purpose of the partnership is to promote sustainable forest management decisions and practices across New York State that consider and support wildlife conservation. The intent is twofold: first, to strengthen the cooperation and delivery of current efforts that provide scientifically-based, practical forestland management information to foresters, wildlife managers, loggers and landowners; second, to provide additional tools, information and educational programs to help landowners and managers make informed decisions that blend wildlife and silvicultural values.

The forestry/wildlife partnership will hire an education coordinator to prepare educational materials in several forms for use by their respective partners. The education coordinator will use information from a technical report being prepared by Audubon New York, together with previously published research and the working experiences of the partners. Past issues of the Audubon Advocate have described the research data collected over three summers by forest ecologists and technicians working for Audubon New York.

Education materials will target owners and managers of the millions of acres of private forestland in New York State. Since these forestlands directly benefit the state's residents through provision of open space, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and forest products, we anticipate that enabling more informed decisions on these lands will improve the lives of many New Yorkers. Individual landowners will be able to understand the relationship between forest harvesting practices, wildlife habitat, and populations and thus manipulate forests to more efficiently and predictably achieve ecological and economic goals.

Work done in the 1990's by Audubon Pennsylvania, in forests similar to New York's, showed distinct assemblages of wildlife species that preferred mature, unharvested, or lightly-harvested forests; other assemblages of species preferred “early successional” habitats such as clear-cuts or other heavily-harvested forests. Preliminary analyses by Audubon New York researchers show very similar patterns. For example, some bird species of conservation concern respond positively to heavy logging but others respond negatively. Many other wildlife species are relatively unaffected by how intensively forests are harvested.

Audubon New York plans to hire the education/outreach specialist in February, 2003. The specialist will design and write education materials suitable for the variety of audiences involved in forest management. Draft education materials, ready for audience testing, are expected by the end of the summer. Partnership members will make the outreach materials available and begin education programs in the fall of 2003, and continue this outreach through following years. The material will be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that it is accurate, current and useful to the intended target audiences.

### MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS OF THE FORESTRY/WILDLIFE PARTNERSHIP ADVISORY GROUP:

Audubon New York; Cornell University's Forestry Extension Program; Consultants in the Public Interest; International Paper Company; Empire State Forest Products Association; New York Forest Owners Association; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (Divisions of Lands and Forests and Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, and Natural Heritage Program); New York Independent Consulting Foresters; New York Farm Bureau; Northeastern Loggers Association; Paul Smiths' College.

### THE MEMBERSHIP AFFILIATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Consulting In the Public Interest, Audubon New York, SUNY-ESF, International Paper, SUNY-ESF, NYS DEC (Wildlife Bureau), Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and Cornell Cooperative Extension.