

*On behalf of all 14,000 Audubon members statewide, and particularly those living in the affected regions of southeastern Minnesota, we urge members of the Minnesota legislature to:*

- \* **support a temporary moratorium** on further permitting of any silica sand mine, sorting or handling facility, while...
- \* a **Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS)** is prepared to examine issues related to these facilities, in order to...
- \* **provide comprehensive, science-based information** to local units of government for their regulatory decisions, and to...
- \* **recommend and implement statewide regulations and standards** necessary to protect our natural resources, people, infrastructure and local communities, including recommending areas for permanent exclusion of silica sand facilities.

In addition to many other concerns (silica dust, noise and light disruptions to people and wildlife, road traffic and damage, etc.) raised by other organizations and individuals, Audubon members are particularly concerned about silica sand mining impacts to:

**Groundwater - both quantity and quality.** Groundwater provides critical winter and drought "base flow" which sustains streams, seeps and wetland habitats in the region. Pristine groundwater provides drinking water to numerous communities and individuals, and must not be wasted nor contaminated by chemicals used in the sand separation process.

**Rare habitats and species.** Southeastern Minnesota is home to 40% of the state-listed Endangered species. The blufflands also support the largest number of Species in Greatest Conversation Need in the state (156 species). Goat prairies atop bluffs targeted for mining provide critical habitat for many rare plants, insects and animals. Golden Eagles have recently been found to frequent these bluff-top ecosystems during the winter. Raptors rely upon the thermals rising from these topographic features to ease their migrations. Along the Minnesota River Valley, native prairie habitats have been proposed for mining. The Threatened Loggerhead Shrike is found in the region. The Mississippi River Flyway is of global significance, with hundreds of millions of birds migrating along and utilizing the river and adjoining forest habitats twice annually. These habitats have been recognized as Important Bird Areas, as a result.

**Outdoor Recreation and Tourism** - year 'round. Local communities depend upon hunters and anglers, thousands of birders, and other tourists who come to enjoy Bald Eagles (February-March) Turkey hunting (spring) waves of Warblers (May) Pelicans (summer) trout fishing (spring-fall) concentrations of Canvasbacks and other waterfowl (October) Tundra Swans (November) and Golden Eagles (winter) - to name just a few highlights.