



## Significant next step taken towards developing a Ricelands Conservation Program

**T**he Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved a special \$2 million pilot conservation program that is ideally suited for California ricelands. The CRC, in collaboration with its conservation partners, will use these funds to demonstrate how conservation funding can be wisely invested in rice-lands to further enhance habitat.

This is a significant next step towards the CRC's goal of delivering an industry-wide program in the near future. This pilot will take us from our current work with Audubon and PRBO Conservation Science to test out the practices on just a half-dozen farms to developing and refining an actual program that can deliver funds through NRCS contracts with participants.

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NRCS State Conservationist Ed Burton with CRC Environmental Affairs Manager Paul Buttner.

## New CRC Logo set to debut

**A**fter a half year of discussion and collaboration, the CRC's new logo will debut next month.



The current CRC logo was adopted from an origin mark developed during the California Rice Promotion Board era. While it served our needs well over the years, the new logo is more reflective of where our industry has evolved.

A team of artists at Page Design Group in Sacramento created the new logo, which captures the enormous environmental benefits from California

ricelands, including habitat for nearly 230 wildlife species.

"This logo evokes a sense of place, a sense of the industry and the environmental stewardship and freedom associated with California rice," commented Page Design Vice President Eric Grotenhuis.

The new logo includes the words "California Rice" and not "Commission," reflecting the overriding goal of the CRC to promote and assist the entire industry.

# California Rice

## California rice messages delivered to Capitol Hill

Just as debt ceiling discussions and farm bill debate reached their peak, the importance of California rice was delivered to members of Congress and top aides in July.

California Rice Commission Chairman Charley Mathews, accompanied by CRC President & CEO Tim Johnson and Environmental Affairs Manager Paul Buttner conducted more than 20 meetings with California lawmakers and top aides during three days at the Capitol.

The CRC delegation conveyed the value of California rice and the importance of continuing a safety net to assist the industry through inevitable price declines. The meetings helped lawmakers better understand the valuable role California rice plays in this state, providing habitat to nearly 230 wildlife species, as well as thousands of jobs and \$1.8 billion a year to the economy.

From left, The CRC's Paul Buttner, Chairman Charley Mathews and President & CEO Tim Johnson.



## Debt deal is reached but uncertainty continues

*By Russell & Barron, a Washington, D.C. government affairs firm specializing in food, agriculture and trade issues*

Following months of tense and at times turbulent posturing, Congressional leaders and President Obama completed action on the Budget Control Act of 2011 just hours before the U.S. Treasury faced default. The budget deal allows the President to borrow between \$2.1 trillion and \$2.4 trillion, pushing another debt ceiling debate past the 2012 elections; a key victory for President

Obama. Meeting Republican demands, the debt ceiling increase is met initially by a \$917 billion dollar spending cut to all discretionary appropriations bills for the next 10 years. The additional \$1.2 trillion increase must be offset by spending cuts in discretionary and mandatory spending. Cuts exceeding that level confer additional debt ceiling authority to the President, as would a ratified Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution.

A so-called Super Committee of 12 members, equally divided between parties, will be the architect of a final debt reduction bill that must be considered under expedited measures by December 23. The committee must approve any bill with a majority vote meaning at least one member will have to cross partisan lines. If a final bill is not agreed upon, an across-the-board budget cutting process known as sequestration will be automatically triggered cutting both mandatory and discretionary spending beginning in 2013.

No cuts will initially be made to direct payments or any other mandatory farm programs. For the rice program, this means the final debt deal dodges several bullets, including a tentative plan put forth earlier in the summer that would have cut direct payments drastically. More importantly, the leadership of both Agriculture Committees will get an open door to make budget recommendations to the debt-buster committee by October 14.

What this ultimately means to California rice growers is unclear. No changes are in store for the current crop year and changes for 2012 are increasingly unlikely. Cuts are on the way but in what form is uncertain. And, if across-the-board cuts are triggered, virtually all nutrition programs, including SNAP, are exempt leaving just about 30 percent of the Farm Bill budget exposed and on the chopping block.

Farm policy will continue to be shaped by broader deficit debates continuing well into 2013.





## New report highlights Raptor Species using California Ricelands

The CRC has released its first science-based publication about the benefits of California ricelands to raptors. This latest addition to the publications highlighting wildlife benefits from rice fields is packed with spectacular photos and extraordinary new conclusions about raptor use of rice fields.

Ricelands are used by about 14 of these stunning and powerful birds. Of these, six species benefit more significantly than others, including the Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and White-tailed Kite.

Research to date concludes that California ricelands support numbers of raptors equivalent to populations supported by over 300,000 acres of wetlands—an amount of habitat that would cost approximately \$2 billion to create today. In fact, the recent research suggests that no other area in North America supports as high a density and diversity of wintering raptors as the Central Valley—a region in which ricelands provide significant bird habitat.

This new report is part of the CRC's expanding efforts to guide regional research to enable us to better quantify and communicate the value of ricelands habitat. In addition to educating the general public, these conclusions should enable us to have more significant impact on resource management policy discussions in Sacramento as well as in Washington, DC.

Copies are available upon request by calling our office at (916) 387-2264.



## Killdeer Cam a big hit on CRC Website

Bird nests are common in California rice country, although they hold fascination by the public.

The CRC website ran its first webcam of a bird's nest in late June, profiling Killdeer parents and their eggs at the Rice Experiment Station near Biggs. The webcam offered a new photo of the nest every five seconds and was on for three weeks, culminating in the hatching of two chicks.

This effort proved a huge success, with nearly 180,000 hits – one of the most popular events in the history of the CRC website.

We appreciate the tremendous assistance from Dr. Kent McKenzie and his staff at the Rice Experiment Station in making this happen. We will seek out future webcams of bird activity in the Sacramento Valley.







## Label interpretation remains an important part of pesticide applications

“The label is the law,” is a saying that exists with pesticide regulators, sometimes coining it as “Enforcement 101.” With our busy schedules, it is often necessary to revisit the basics. The addition of technology and electronic services can cause us to make shortcuts in daily decisions.

### *Isn't reading the label old fashioned?*

Reading and following the label associated with the pesticide application is a requirement that has never changed. The county biologist inspecting your pesticide application will check for compliance with the label in hand (on the container) and any supplemental information such as a section(s) 24(c), 2(ee), 18, and/or permit conditions.

### *The written recommendation provides all the information I need.*

Yes, but the PCA might not include label and/or permit condition information such as wind speed (mph), vulnerable crop(s), buffer zones, restricted entry intervals and pre-harvest intervals. In addition, non-restricted mate-

rials and/or private applicator applications do not always require written recommendations. The responsibility for compliance includes the PCA, grower and applicator, but will fall on the person with the label in hand at the time of application. An important rule to follow: whatever is listed on the label is not an option.

### *Is it just the pest, or the crop that must be listed on the label?*

Some people misunderstand and believe that the pest only needs to be listed on the label. Actually, the crop shall be on the label and the pest must be included as the control could happen through incidental use.

The U.S. EPA establishes a residue tolerance for the active ingredient on the commodity as the final process in registering the pesticide. All pesticides sold and used in California must first be registered with the U.S. EPA and then go through the process with the Department of Pesticide Regulation.

### *Why is any of this important?*

Countries receiving California rice, such as Japan, test for approximately 600 chemicals. Any illegal detection could cause California rice to fail the chemical test, resulting in rejected commodity shipments. Worse case scenario is a crop destruct for illegal residue. Add to this, heightened awareness of food safety concerns from the public. In the end, the California rice industry suffers a loss of credibility with customers domestically and abroad.

The CRC supports the advances in technology for pesticide applications. However, reading and comparing available labels to those on the container is a proactive approach to credibility in stewardship and maintaining a high reputation with our public stakeholders.



# Conservation

Continued from cover

This initial small-scale pilot program will be ground-tested in the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District beginning in 2011-12. Initially, the program will focus on about six specific practices beneficial to waterbirds, including:

- Returning boards back into the rice boxes after harvest to hold more rainwater.
- Enhancements of nesting habitat by modifying rice check berms and creating nesting islands.
- Enhancing duration and types of fall and early spring habitat created when intentionally flooding rice fields in the winter season.
- Installing nesting and roost structures for certain non-waterbird species such as hawks, eagles and owls.

This pilot-scale effort, which received over 75 applicants within the two-week sign-up period, will also include monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate proven results. The CRC will manage this pilot opportunity as a “stepping stone” towards a goal of establishing an industry-wide program available to all growers within the next few years.

## We recognize our major partners in this effort

NRCS • Audubon  
PRBO Conservation Science  
The Nature Conservancy  
UC Cooperative Extension • GCID

***Rice farms and farming families that have allowed us to try our new practices on their farms, including:***

Davis Ranch, Don Bransford, Don Traynham  
Jack and Mike DeWit, Montna Farms, Jim LaGrande  
John Brennan, Steve and Tom Butler



*Top- growers Don Traynham and Roger Anderson discuss the program with Glenn County District Conservationist Rob Vlach. Second from top- growers Lorraine Marsh and Jim LaGrande prepare applications, aided by Colusa District Conservationist Andrea Casey. Below - USDA-NRCS State Conservationist Ed Burton with grower Gary Enos of Carriere Family Farms.*



## EPA scientist visits California rice country

Rice grower Steve Butler provides information about growing practices to EPA Environmental Scientist Debra Denton during a California rice farm tour facilitated by the CRC. “It is really nice to have the personal connection, to stand and talk to a farmer and understand his day-to-day operation,” Denton said. Also participating were Hirozumi Watanabe, Tokyo University Professor, and Richard Breuer from the State Department of Water Resources Environmental Services Office. The tour included a second rice farm stop, with information provided by grower Sean Doherty, CRC Industry Affairs Manager Roberta Firoved and UC Farm Advisors Chris Greer and Luis Espino.

# Trade discussions include progress and disappointment

*The following article is by Bob Cummings, Senior Vice President for the USA Rice Federation*

**T**he brinksmanship of last August to produce an agreement in Congress to increase the U.S. government's debt ceiling has cleared the way for movement on congressional consideration of pending bilateral free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. Each of these deals will have an impact on U.S. rice exports, but the impacts won't be evenly felt across the breadth of the U.S. industry.

The Colombia free trade agreement holds the most promise because it provides for an annual tariff rate quota (TRQ) for 79,000 metric tons (mt), milled rice basis, of U.S. rice with a zero duty. This TRQ grows over time until free trade in rice occurs in year 19 of the agreement. The ability to import U.S. rice at a zero duty – versus Colombia's current duty of 80 percent – will be managed in the United States by the U.S. and Colombian rice industries via a certificate auction system. The net proceeds of the auctions, called quota rents, will be split 50-50 between the U.S. and Colombian industries. These quota rents could be substantial, and the USA Rice Federation supports the allocation of these funds to the six rice states to support rice research. Colombia's past rice imports of rice from the United States have been predominantly long grain rough. While the TRQ is for all types and forms of U.S. rice, initial imports will likely follow the past trend.



The U.S.-Panama FTA phases out Panama's duties on U.S. rice over a 20-year period. Two separate TRQs are established for rough rice and milled rice. Imports within the TRQs are duty free. The rough rice TRQ in year one is 7,950 mt. The milled rice TRQ in year one is 4,240 mt. Each TRQ will increase 6 percent annually, reaching 22,692 mt and 12,102 mt, respectively, in year 19 before rice trade becomes duty free in year 20. It's unclear how much additional rice the United States will sell under the agreement since exports to Panama in 2008-2010 averaged 71,319 mt, 94 percent of which was rough long grain.

The FTA with South Korea is a tremendous disappointment for the

U.S. rice industry, no more so than for California's rice producers and marketers. Rice was excluded from the agreement because of the crop's political sensitivity in Korea. Minimal U.S. access for rice is guaranteed by a 10-year agreement in the World Trade Organization (WTO) that expires in 2014. Under this agreement, the United States will ship 50,076 mt of rice, which is traditionally imported by Korea as brown or milled medium grain. Actual imports have generally exceeded the U.S. country specific allocation as U.S. rice competed successfully for the global portion of Korea's overall annual WTO import commitment, which is 243,361 mt in 2011.





# Artists capture California Ricelands wildlife

For our eighth consecutive year, the CRC supported the amazing artists of the Pacific Flyway Decoy Association. Each year they put on an incredible show, called The Wildfowl Art Classic, that brings together the best of the best carvers in the region to compete for the best ricelands bird carvings. This marked the 41st year for the competition and show, which attracted more than 1,000 spectators and is perfect to highlight the connection between rice and wild-life habitat.

This year, the CRC categories were split between a shorebird and a duck species.

Taking the blue ribbon for the shorebird was a Whimbrel carving by long-time Sacramento-based carver Don Hovie, who said he enjoyed the



REDHEAD by Roger Anderson

## WHIMBREL

by Don Hovie



challenge in capturing this beautiful bird. “The Whimbrel has a classic look and shape and lends well for artistic rendering,” he said.

The second category winner was a duck called a Redhead—a colorful waterfowl species that sometimes uses rice fields. Roger Anderson, a Tahoe City-based carver, took home the honors

with his beautifully carved piece. “I really enjoyed carving the winning Redhead duck for this year’s competition,” Anderson remarked. “Much of my preparation begins in the field with viewing and photography of wild ducks in Sacramento Valley rice fields.”

We congratulate both of these fine artists and look forward to seeing them in our competition next year!

## Water quality program is a fluid process

The Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) will continue under a two-year extension. During this time, the waste discharge requirement (WDR) “Order” will be under development as the permanent, Long-term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (LT-ILRP). The LT-ILRP will include nutrients and groundwater with other details currently in development.

The CRC is one of three progressive coalitions selected to go first through the approval process in January 2012. Every meeting with the water board staff involves more revisions to the program details. The CRC will work closely with water board staff to focus on developing a feasible program within the current time frame.

## CALIFORNIA RICE COMMISSION

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## Sacramento Valley farm water efficiency highlighted

A new publication should provide momentum to a broader education about efficient water use in the Sacramento Valley. The report prepared for the Northern California Water Association (NCWA) includes positive information on rice farming, including how it is managed in the fields and the environmental benefits that come from growing rice.

The CRC assisted with many areas of this publication, as part of a cooperative approach with NCWA on issues of mutual interest.

The report and summary can be found at [www.norcalwater.org](http://www.norcalwater.org) and clicking on the “Efficient Water Management” link.

