



## Programs provide a boost for conservation work

There's quite a bit of current activity in this area as we continue building California rice's "wildlife resume" and deliver programs to growers that help fund wildlife conservation projects. Our work includes exploring public sector opportunities, primarily focusing on Farm Bill programs, as well as examining market-based ecosystem services opportunities to private entities interested in purchasing wildlife benefits.

### Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program (WHEP)

With approximately 200 farms enrolled on over 100,000 acres, our efforts have now shifted to how we can make this program an ongoing option for growers. Current program rules seem to be limiting NRCS' ability to renew contracts beyond three years. The CRC worked on Capitol Hill to sponsor amendments to the House version of the Farm Bill intended to help address this constraint. Representatives Garamendi and LaMalfa were supportive and effective at helping us get that language in place.

As the farm bill moves to conference we will be working to ensure that these constraints within the program regarding long term contracting are addressed.

### Proposed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Over the past couple of years, the CRC has focused on a new proposal in both the House and Senate Farm Bills called RCPP. This program will designate conservation funding to be directed to certain specially designated regions. We believe that the large-scale conservation benefits provided by rice may be appropriate for such a designation. We worked closely with Senate Ag Committee staff to insert an amendment that would make wildlife habitat for migratory birds an important feature to be considered when making such designations.

### New Conservation Program Opportunity with The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Currently called the Migration Market, we have worked with TNC to develop this new opportunity utilizing private donor funds to incentivize growers to employ certain waterbird conservation practices.

In this first pilot year, the Migration Market program identifies three conservation practice options for rice farmers to manage water to benefit a variety of shorebirds. The pilot will focus on the creation of spring habitat (February through March) on acres not currently enrolled in WHEP. TNC will offer conservation contracts in a competitive bidding manner. Bids will be solicited from growers and TNC will contract with the most competitive bids, comparing participants in similar localities (by basin) and of equal habitat value.

We appreciate the willingness of TNC and its private donors to invest conservation funding in ricelands to further enhance the value of rice fields as wildlife habitat.



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## National TV Program shoots in rice country

California rice fields will be the backdrop and a subject for an upcoming episode of “America’s Heartland” popular syndicated public television show.

Since it began in 2005 “America’s Heartland” has traveled all fifty states and abroad to bring viewers an entertaining and informative look of where their food comes from.

The episode shot in rice country is hosted by Sarah Gardner and her introductions to the stories were shot at the DeWit Farm in Elverta. California rice will be included in the mix of stories.

The episode will air this fall at an as-yet undetermined date. We will provide an update in a future publication.



Sarah Gardner of “America’s Heartland” displays Calrose rice to introduce one story.

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## Rice WDR Order update

The public workshop of the Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) Order for rice growers in the Sacramento Valley area will be held in October 2013. The Rice WDR Order includes surface and groundwater monitoring programs, farm evaluations and management plans. Unlike other coalitions, we do not anticipate public workshops leading to the adoption of the Rice WDR Order.

The Rice WDR Order is a permanent regulatory process several years in the making. Through this rulemaking process, the CRC has commented on the Existing Conditions Report and the Program Environmental Impact Report. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document will be included with the Rice WDR Order through the Administrative Record posted by Region 5 of the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board (CVWQCB).

We have been working on behalf of

the California rice growers to craft a program most suitable for rice production in the Sacramento River Basin. Our process was similar to the approach we used in development of the conditional waiver under the current Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP). We created the ILRP from the monitoring and reporting program (MRP) we developed in advance of the conditional waiver approval. The MRP was an accumulation of existing surface water data, which provided the basis for a technically defensible rice specific waiver.

Using a similar concept, we did an analysis of the existing groundwater data in the Sacramento River Basin. The Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR) is a requirement of the WDR Order once it is adopted. We felt that rice growers would benefit from an analysis of the existing groundwater data in advance of an adopted Rice WDR Order. The GAR was used to provide justification for the scope of monitoring

under a groundwater program specific to rice. Through this process we once again developed a technically defensible rice specific program utilizing the expertise of the CRC Staff, CH2M Hill, PlanTierra and Somach Simmons & Dunn.

We will start developing templates necessary for Farm Evaluations, Nutrient Management Plans, and a format for reporting information to the rice commission. Through our process, we will work on a format that maintains confidentiality of our member information as specified in the rice commission statute.

The process for developing WDR Orders for agriculture in the CVRWQCB Region 5 began in 2007. We still have our work cut out for us, but will not lose focus on positioning ourselves to move forward with the most comprehensive and technically defensible Rice WDR Order in the region for the ultimate benefit of the rice industry.

# The path of least resistance is hard to find for the 2013 Farm Bill

By The Russell Group, a Washington, D.C. government affairs firm specializing in food, agriculture and trade issues.

After a jarring defeat for the Farm Bill at the end of June, a slim majority of the House approved a revised farm bill with a six-vote margin July 11 after removing the \$744 billion nutrition title containing the food stamp program now known as SNAP.

By jettisoning the single largest and fastest growing program of the Farm Bill, the House Republican Leadership led by Majority Leader Eric Cantor began work immediately on a separate, individual piece of legislation to reauthorize the nutrition title including SNAP. Right before Congress departed for the entire month of August, a Congressional SNAP working group including the House Agriculture Committee Chairman reached agreement on a nutrition bill that would save \$40 billion from the SNAP program over the next decade. The \$4 billion per year in annual savings totals just a 5 percent reduction in a program that has grown nearly 250 percent since 2005.

The details of the legislation have not been officially released however the parameters we believe eliminate categorical eligibility, or automatic SNAP enrollment for individuals receiving

assistance from other state or federal welfare programs, saving nearly \$12 billion of the \$40 billion total. A larger share of savings will come from the elimination of authority that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has granted in 47 of 50 states to waive work requirements for males participating in the program. This provision requires abled body males after six months of program enrollment to either be looking for work or employed.

Meanwhile, the Senate procedurally rejected the scaled back House bill by sending its earlier version back to the House. By striking the House measure and inserting the text of the Senate-passed farm bill, including a nutrition title, the Senate has taken the next step toward a formal Conference with the House to reconcile differences between the two versions. Only when the House and Senate have passed identical versions can a bill be sent to the President for his signature.

The Senate leadership took an additional step by appointing Senators to an eventual conference with the House. Those Senate conferees include Democrats Debbie Stabenow (D-MI),

Chair; and Senators Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) Republican Senators include Ranking Member Thad Cochran (R-MS), Pat Roberts (R-KS), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), John Boozman (R-AR), and John Hoeven (R-ND).

When Congress returns in early September we expect House Republican leadership will attempt to pass the SNAP nutrition title reforms early in the month. After that outcome we believe Speaker Boehner will weigh his options for appointing House conferees. Either with or without a nutrition title, the Farm Bill will move ahead. Whichever road this farm bill chooses to travel, for California rice our objective is to ensure the California reference price lives in the final agreement sent for the President to sign.



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# CRC welcomes Jason Weller to new post at NRCS

Several of us who make the annual journey to Washington, D.C. each February know Jason Weller. Jason formerly worked as Chief of Staff under Chief Dave White at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Since Dave's departure, Jason Weller has been serving as Acting Chief. We are pleased to announce that Jason's appointment is official and we look forward to working with him on various conservation programs in California rice.

Prior to joining the NRCS, Jason worked on the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture where he provided oversight and crafted bills related to USDA programs. He also served on the U.S. House Budget Committee where he helped construct the annual budget for agriculture, environment and energy programs. Jason also worked with the

White House Office of Management and Budget where he assisted with the development and implementation of USDA conservation program budgets.

Before coming to Washington, D.C., Jason worked for several years with the California State Legislature where he provided fiscal and policy recommendations on various natural resource conservation and environmental protection issues.

Jason is a native of northern California. He earned his undergraduate degree from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and a graduate degree in public policy from the University of Michigan.

We were honored to have Jason come out to California rice country last spring where we showcased how we are putting conservation on the ground through the Waterbird Habitat



Enhancement Program that he helped to create by making federal funding available to support the effort.

We wish Jason all the best in his new adventure.



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## Winning Ricelands Bird Carvers strike Gold again!

The winning carvers of Ricelands Waterbirds at this year's Pacific Flyway Decoy Association Art Show are no strangers to our competition. Both of them have a long relationship with us and always seem to be interested in competing in the CRC's Ricelands Waterbirds categories.

We congratulate Del Herbert on his majestic, life-sized Egret carving and Michael Nesbit for his beautiful rendition of a Wilson's Phalarope. Herbert is from Chula Vista, while Nesbit is a little closer to us up in Quincy. They both were honored to be selected by the judges as the winners of our competition this year. They also made

it very clear that the CRC's ongoing commitment to supporting their craft is very appreciated.

We are establishing quite a reputation with the birding community that always has strong participation in this annual event. It's a perfect place for us to remind bird art enthusiasts that California rice fields are providing significant amounts of habitat for many of the bird species they enjoy.

Congratulations to Del and Michael on their winning birds in this year's competition.

# Strong attendance, lasting memories at California Rice Reception

The 12th annual California Rice Circle of Life Reception included a new time of the year, record attendance and increased participation by Legislators.

We moved the reception to June this year, to seek a time when there would be a greater opportunity to have Legislators participate. Based on the turnout, the plan worked. Their increased participation helped bring a record attendance of 160 for the reception at the Sheraton Grand Sacramento.

Highlights included the Capitol Roller Sushi Competition, won by Assembly Majority Leader Toni Atkins. Her rendition of a California Roll beat out those prepared by fellow Assembly Members Richard Pan, Marc Levine and Brian Dahle, as well as Senator Cathleen Galgiani. All received expert guidance from Kru Chef Billy Ngo. KCRA 3 Reports Anchor Kellie DeMarco emceed the program along with CRC President & CEO Tim Johnson. The two were assisted by radio personalities Jack Armstrong and

Joe Getty, who provided witty color commentary during the sushi rolling.

The Sheraton menu included gourmet offerings expertly prepared by Executive Chef Adam Peiffer. Reception guests dined on braised beef short ribs with saffron Calrose rice, an extensive selection of sushi and nigiri, and sticky rice cakes with a spiced peach glaze. California rice was used in all of the dishes.

Immediately prior to the reception, California Rice Boxes were delivered to the Capitol as well as other target audiences. The boxes depicted two art pieces from naturalist, artist and educator John Muir Laws, highlighting wildlife species in our rice fields.

Media coverage of the reception and Capitol Roller Competition included a large color photo and caption on page A-3 of the Sacramento Bee, KFBK NewsTalk 1530, Capitol Morning



Report, KCRA 3 Reports and several other television stations, including KTVU Oakland.

Assembly Member Atkins said she was thrilled to participate in the competition and equally excited about winning the Capitol Roller Competition.

“As a serious sushi lover, I was excited to learn that almost every piece of sushi produced in the United States is made with California rice,” Atkins said. “I am sure that is what makes it so wonderful. As a Southern Californian, where we don’t have rice fields, I have appreciated the opportunity to spend time with California rice farmers and to learn about their history and how important rice is to our state.”

California Rice Commission President & CEO Tim Johnson visits with Assembly Majority Leader Toni Atkins, the new Capitol Roller Champion.

# An eight-week Immersion

She grew up in rice country—Maxwell to be exact—in a cattle ranching family. While the rice fields were familiar and dryers commonplace, it turns out that there was a lot more to rice than met her eye. The CRC's first intern Maddie Dunlap has been immersed in the regulatory, conservation and communications of the rice industry for eight weeks this summer.

A senior at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, majoring in Ag Communications, Maddie spent four two-week sessions looking at policy, pesticide and water quality regulations, conservation and finally communications with each of the CRC managers.

Reading her weekly blogs, it is clear that much goes on behind the green

and gold curtain of rice production.

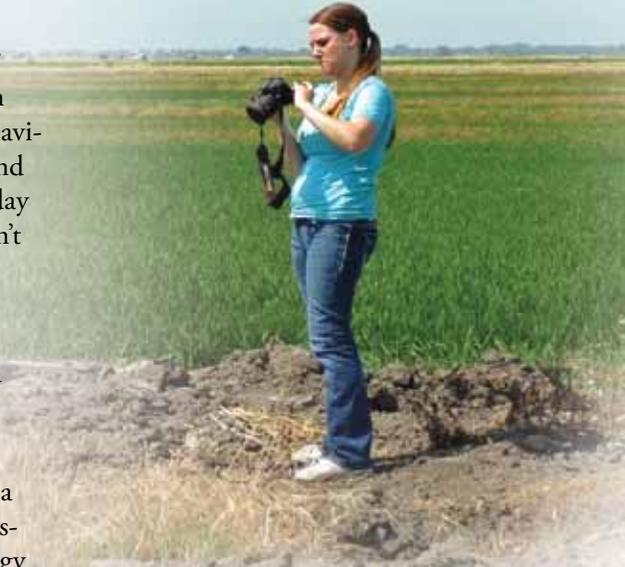
"I was continually surprised to learn how many issues the rice industry navigates. Through the CRC, growers and handlers are actively working each day to make sure that the challenges don't overwhelm the day-to-day farming and marketing of rice," commented Dunlap. "Growers can be proud of their Commission. The CRC does a great job for the industry."

The CRC learned much from the internship as well. Maddie brought a fresh perspective to our branding discussions and a help on the technology side.

"We were impressed, as always, by the caliber of students from Cal Poly and the commitment of the next generation of family farmers. Maddie did a

fantastic job both learning and doing," stated CRC President & CEO Tim Johnson.

Maddie hopes to go into Ag policy following graduation in the spring of 2014.



## @CRCUpdates – real time CA Rice news

Want real time updates on the key issues in the rice industry and what we are doing to address them? If you are an industry member and on Twitter, you are in luck. We have launched @CRCUpdates.

Twitter is rapidly becoming the source for real time news on the topics that are important to your business. If you are not using this tool, you should. Think of it as the news headline feed that runs at the bottom of a cable news station – headlines and in many cases a link to a story or video on the subject. A quick glance two or three times a day and you will be getting the news before you hear it on the radio, catch it on the evening news or certainly before you read it in the morning paper.

In August, the CRC launched a subscription-only feed at @CRCUpdates. Simply type the address in the search box at the top of your Twitter page and request to follow. If you are a California rice industry member, we will add you to the group!

**CRC Updates**  
**California Rice**   
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Get real time updates on important California rice issues  
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**Tweets**

**CRC Updates** **California Rice** @CRCUpdates 43m  
Soares and Johnson will brief CDFA Sec Ross on As Tuesday prior to her meeting w FDA Commissioner Hamburg 9/3. TJ  
[Expand](#)

**CRC Updates** **California Rice** @CRCUpdates 2h  
Just signed up for a social media conference in Minnesota next month that should be outstanding. JM  
[Expand](#)

# CRC and NCWA continue the focus on Sac Valley and underlying resources

We have said for years that the Sacramento Valley is a unique place to live and farm. There is no other place like it with the abundant wildlife, small communities and great agriculture. We also recognize that without our natural resources – farmlands, wild lands and most importantly water, there is no way it can continue. Farmers and our neighbors in the Sacramento Valley get it. The challenge is that there are very few of us out here north of the Sleep Train Arena.

For two years the CRC and NCWA have teamed to bring forth the proposition that the Sacramento Valley is a unique place to our urban neighbors – a place worth preserving by ensuring that we have productive farms, thriving communities and the resources that underpin it.

Over the past several months this effort is aligning perfectly with a renaissance in Sacramento which is seeing everyone talking about agriculture



– the jobs it provides, the food we enjoy and the great lifestyle it supports. People are talking in dozens of venues from the Sacramento Metro Chamber to regional coalitions of governments to restaurants about how valuable agriculture is to the region. Sacramento is embracing its “Cow Town” roots!

What’s more – they are actively seeking to know what we in agriculture need to stay in business. What help do we

need to expand? Bet you never thought you’d hear those words.

Similar and very integrated discussions are going on about what it means to live in the Sacramento Valley and what makes it so unique. Agriculture and abundant natural resources including water are always mentioned.

Clearly the joint CRC and NCWA efforts to define what makes the region unique are influencing this discussion.

## Social Media gets a boost from advertising

Strong industry participation and a steady flow of information have helped the CRC social media outreach continue to grow since we ramped up outreach in 2010.

Advertising on Facebook is a new cost-effective tool that has just been implemented with impressive results. The ads encouraged people to “like” the California Rice Facebook Page, which netted more than 1,000 likes. These additional followers increased the total reach of our Facebook page by more than 60 percent.

We will continue to work to expand our audiences in all of our social media pages, including YouTube, Twitter and Flickr. As the audiences grow, so does the understanding of those outside of rice country of the value of this industry.

You can quickly link to any of our social media pages by logging on to CalRice.org and clicking on the icons at the top right of our home page.

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## Capturing California Rice on canvas

**T**he latest artist selected to commemorate California Rice has a connection to our first painter.

Former geologist turned filmmaker Phil Gross began painting shortly after working on a documentary about Gregory Kondos, the first artist selected to help promote this industry.

After a thorough review of promising artists in the region, Gross has been chosen as our 2014 artist. Following an extensive tour of Sacramento Valley rice country, fields off of Highway 45 near Grimes were selected. Gross has toured the site a second time and work is underway on two paintings. One art piece will depict the field during the later part of the growing season while a second painting will show the same field at winter.

For nearly a decade, the CRC has worked with prominent area artists to help promote the beauty of rice farming through their work. The paintings are the foundation of labels on rice boxes

that are a unique and valued outreach effort to Legislators and others. In addition, the paintings, fabric collage and glass vessel have been displayed in offices in the State Capitol and in showings in front of the Governor's Office. We will seek out additional locations to share this art with key audiences.

Gross said he's excited about this project and having a chance to create art in one of the beautiful parts of our state, the Sacramento Valley.

"The valley is amazing," he remarked. "The colors you get in the valley are unlike any other landscape, including the yellow-greens in the beautiful rice fields. Perspective shots are gorgeous and they're broken up by geometry. Usually there's a line of telephone poles marching off into the distance to give you a sense of perspective. This is beautiful land."