



California Rice

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California Rice Response to Governor Newsom's Drought and Water Resilience Package

Plan paves the way to protect Pacific Flyway wildlife during severe drought

The California Rice Commission commends Governor Newsom for protecting Pacific Flyway wildlife at a time when millions of birds may be vulnerable due to drought. The Governor's action recognizes Sacramento Valley, including its ricelands, as a critical area to achieve multiple objectives during this drought.

California rice growers stand ready to utilize our lands through special strategic use of groundwater pumping to save vital habitat for millions of migrating birds and other wildlife during these challenging times of drought.

California's 500,000 acres of rice serve multiple purposes, including being the main food source for 7 to 10 million waterbirds making their annual migration through this critically important migratory corridor. Due to the sudden and extreme drought conditions, most farmers have been told surface water deliveries for winter flooding will likely not be available. We look forward to working with the State Water Board on a balanced solution as we work through this difficult year.

Without winter flooding, the Flyway will be seriously impacted. Never before have we seen winter water deliveries curtailed to such extreme levels. In our state, where over 90 percent of the original wetlands are gone, over 200 species have become dependent upon the surrogate wetlands provided by rice fields. For example, approximately 50 percent of everything ducks eat comes out of winter-flooded rice fields. These fields are also essential for struggling shorebirds and, therefore, have been specially designated as Shorebird Habitat of International Significance.

"We are grateful for Governor Newsom's quick action to safeguard the environment" said California Rice Commission President & CEO Tim Johnson. "Having millions of birds find nothing but dry fields when they arrive here next fall would be devastating.

The California Rice Commission represents the 2,500 family farmers and handlers who grow and process rice in our state. California Rice is the environmental crop, providing food and a resting place for millions of birds that travel along the Pacific Flyway.