



California Drought Statement (January 2023)

Recent storms bring optimism during the ongoing drought crisis to those connected to California Rice, with the entire rice workforce, farming communities and the [wildlife that rely on planted rice fields](#) for their long-term survival remaining hopeful.

“The Sacramento Valley’s rice fields are a unique crop of natural working lands that can help provide a healthy economy, environment and overall ecosystem to 230 wildlife species, millions of migratory waterbirds traveling the Pacific Flyway, the state and federally Threatened Giant Gartersnake, and could be the key in helping to support struggling salmon populations in the Golden State,” said President & CEO of the California Rice Commission Tim Johnson.

The [2022 rice season](#) was damaging not only to the [regions multigenerational family farms, surrounding businesses and agricultural communities](#) that rely on crops in production for their livelihood and long-term survival but also to the [wildlife uniquely connected to California’s rice crop](#).

There are multiple benefits in every acre of rice produced in the Sacramento Valley, with every drop of surface water made available used for a dual purpose – providing jobs to the skilled workforce it takes to get California Rice to your table and the critical space wildlife otherwise wouldn’t have.

In a state that has lost 95% of its historic wetlands, [rice fields in the Sacramento Valley now serve as critical surrogate wetland habitat for wildlife](#) and surround some of the best birdwatching wildlife refuges in the state. Of the water added to the field to grow California Rice, [40% gets recycled](#), flowing to other neighboring farms to help irrigate different crops, traveling to wildlife refuges for further reuse or continuing downstream returning to the environment.

In addition to providing critical habitat for waterbirds in the winter months, rice growers will again use their fields in the off-season and participate in another phase of a several year study, [aimed at helping boost the state’s dwindling salmon population](#). The collaborative pilot project between rice farmers, conservationists with CalTrout, and a team of UC Davis scientists launches in January with a focus on harnessing the leftover nutrient-rich rice straw from planted fields to produce fuel for fish.