California Department of Fish and Wildlife Region 4 Type A Wildlife Area Public Outreach Meeting August 28, 2024, Microsoft Teams Meeting 4pm-6pm

- **4:00** Introductions and Meeting Parameters (Sean Allen, <u>Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor CDFW</u>)
- 4:10 An Overview by USFWS of the Federal Hunt programs on San Luis NWR and Merced NWR
 Chris Harper-Project Leader, Sean Brophy-Deputy Project Leader, Jack Sparks- Outdoor Recreation Planner, and Gabriel Sandoval Refuge Manager Merced NWR
- 4:50 Presentation by DFW Staff on Central Region's Wetland Habitat Conditions and Anticipated Acreage for Public Use
 Mendota WA- Steve Brueggemann, Senior Fish &Wildlife Habitat Supervisor CDFW
 Los Banos WA- Sean Allen, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor, CDFW
 North Grasslands- Pat Cotta, Wildlife Habitat Supervisor I, CDFW
- 5:20 *Break
- **5:30** Public Comments, Recommendations, and Panel Discussion (CDFW, and USFWS Staff)
- **5:55** Wrap up (Sean Allen, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor CDFW)

6:00 Adjourn

If we cannot answer all questions during the time allotted, please email them to: Sean.Allen@wildlife.ca.gov and they will be routed to appropriate staff for answers.



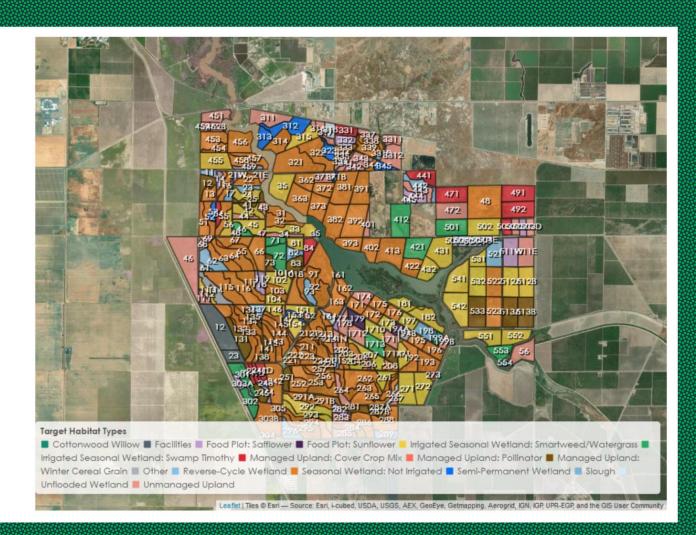
FISH AND GAME CODE

- FISH AND GAME CODE
- DIVISION 2. DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME [700 1940]
- CHAPTER 7.5. Native Species Conservation and Enhancement [1750 1772]
- ARTICLE 2.5. Bird Habitat Conservation [1758-1758.]
- 1758.
- The department shall annually provide an opportunity for licensed hunters to comment and make recommendations on the public hunting programs, including anticipated habitat conditions in the hunting areas on Type A and Type B Wildlife Areas, as defined under the commission's regulations, through public meetings or other public outreach. In complying with this section, the department may hold regional meetings on its hunting programs for several different wildlife areas.
- (Added by Stats. 2013, Ch. 387, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 2014.)

2024 PUBLIC MEETING

Mendota WA

Mendota WA 2024-2025 Habitat





Watergrass has rebounded

Field 54, under water for most of summer 2023 recovered nicely in 2024.

Water Hyacinth

8/29/2022 Red areas in Fresno Slough are water hyacinth

8/4/2023 Flood flows have removed most water hyacinth

8/22/2024 Slough shows a decline in water hyacinth





Trailered Boat Access

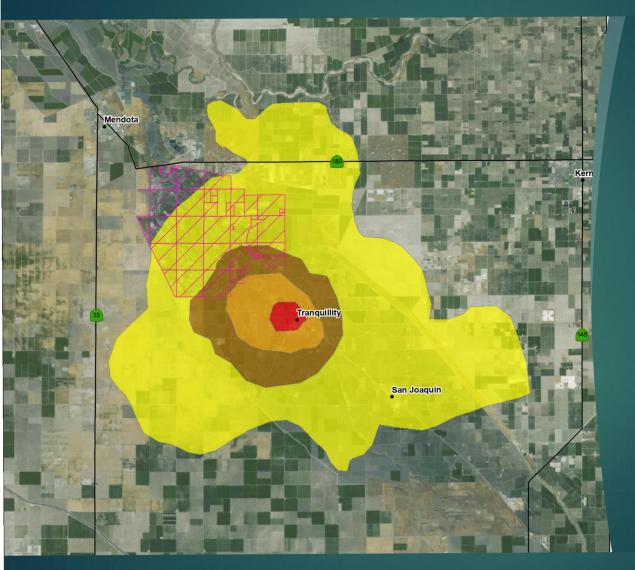
As of today, trailered boat access during the 2024 -2025 waterfowl season will be allowed. However, water hyacinth continues to reproduce and be transported from north of Hwy 180 into the MWA and another hyacinth plug could form at the MWA bridge making boat access from the northern boat ramp unavailable.

Waterfowl Pair and Brood Surveys

Waterfowl Broods/Mile

WATERFOWL PAIR SURVEY AVE #PAIRS/MILE

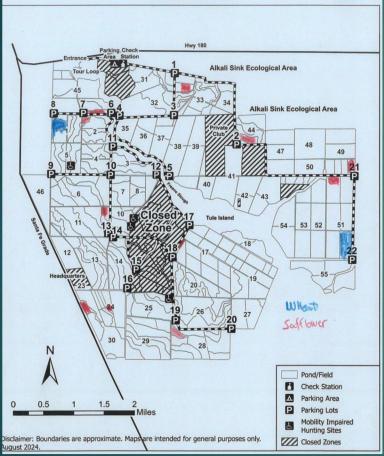
<u>YEAR</u>	MALL	<u>GADW</u>	<u>CITE</u>	YEAR	MALL	GADW	CITE	REDH	PINT
2024	6.61	.86	3.40						
2022	6	1	3	2024	.65	.04	.30	0	0
	Ü	·	Ü	2023					
2021 COVID				2022	.23	.02	0	0	0
2020 COVID				2021 COVID					
2019	13.13	2.63	4.53	2020 COVID					
2018	10.29	3.28	3.6	2019					
2017	5.7	1.48	2.88	2018	.2	.14	.04	0	0
2016	4.1	2.24	2.6	2017	.28	.11	.04	0	0
2015	4.8	2.2	4.6	2016	.41	.34	.03	0	0
2014	8	.5	1	2015	.16	.03	0	0	0
2013	6	1.5	1.7	2014	.31	.06	0	0	0
				2013	.63	.19	.03	0	0
2012	7.3	2.2	1.6	2012	.64	.08	.03	.01	.01
2011	5.8	2.9	2	2011	.49	.28	.12	0	0
2010	10.1	2.7	.98	2010	1.04	.95	.35	.13	.02



Subsidence has been a contributing factor in difficulty of transporting James Bypass flood flows through the MWA

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Central Region Mendota Wildlife Area Fresno County





Safflower planting was delayed by wet soil conditions. Wheat responded well to timely fall rains and has seen excellent use by dove from late July through August

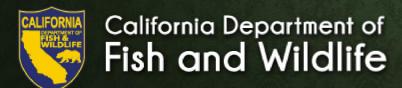
GENERAL COMMENTS

- Water supply is 100% Level 2 for State wildlife areas in the San Joaquin Valley.
- For the first time in recent history Los Banos, Salt Slough, and China Island will allow deer hunting. It is by permit only and only for A Zone tag holders from Sept. 16 through Sept 22. We had a tremendous response and received 263 applications for Los Banos, 175 applications for Salt Slough and 163 applicants for China Island. 5 permits were drawn for Los Banos and 3 for China Island and 3 for Salt Slough.
- Los Banos, Salt Slough and China Island WA will allow a 3-day valley quail hunt on the Wednesday, November 27 before Thanksgiving and the Saturday and Sunday (Nov. 30 and Dec.1) after Thanksgiving. Balance of the State limits and regulations will apply.
- Avian Influenza (AI) is beginning to show up in the SONEC region and is taking its toll on waterfowl. Wildlife area staff has not gotten any alerts or guidance pertaining to this coming season. Continue to monitor CDFW's website for any future protocols relating to AI.
- The CDFW is currently in a Temporary Hiring freeze leaving us with several seasonal positions to hire for this season. Recruiting and retaining qualified, passionate people to do the work on these wildlife areas continues to be a challenge. Opportunities for better wages with other government resource management agencies, the private sector, and even better paying opportunities outside the wildlife areas in CDFW often make hiring and retaining staff difficult. I would like to take a moment to publicly thank our staff here at Los Banos and North Grasslands for their tireless dedication and commitment to these areas and the highly skilled work they do.

LOS BANOS WILDLIFE AREA COMPLEX

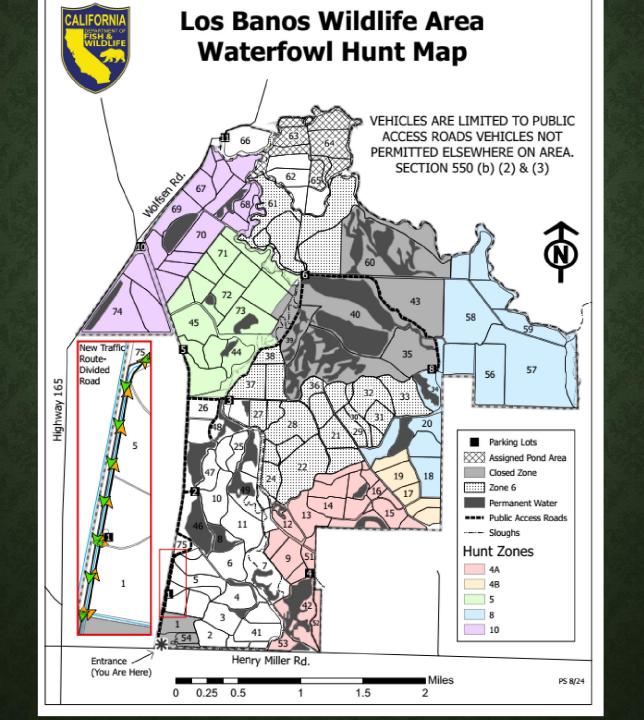
Sean Allen Manager

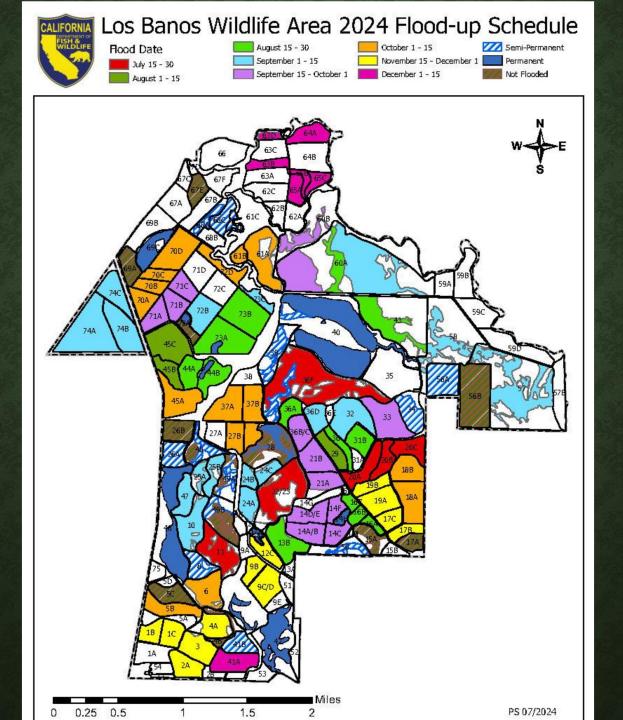
Los Banos Wildlife Area
Mud Slough Unit
Volta Wildlife Area
Little Panoche Reservoir Wildlife Area
Cottonwood Creek Wildlife Area
San Luis Reservoir Wildlife Area
O'Neil Forebay Wildlife Area



LOS BANOS WA HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES 2023/2024

- Several large-scale infrastructure management actions took place or are in the works on Los Banos WA. The Main road from Headquarters to Ruth Lake is in the process of becoming two-way traffic (See following slide). Northbound or out bound traffic will merge right and continue along the east side of the interior delivery ditch. Inbound or exiting traffic will use the original main road with the large San Luis Canal on the right and the smaller internal delivery ditch on the left. Our thanks DU for managing that project.
- Water Hyacinth continues to be a problem in our drains, lakes and delivery systems. Spraying and mechanical removal keeps this issue barely at bay.
- Hunter quotas will be about the same as last seasons on the opener. We
 will still have a small amount of stage flooding of some of the area. Full
 quotas should be in effect in early December.

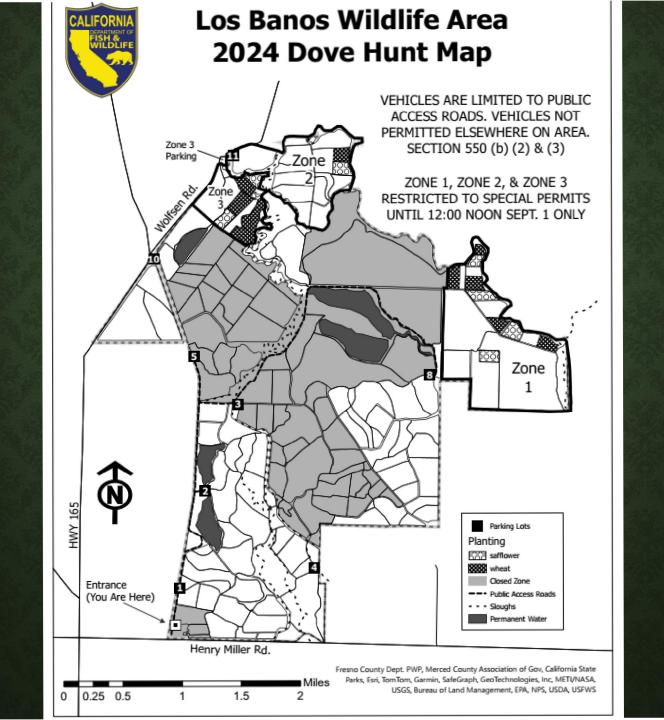




LOS BANOS WA HUNTER QUOTAS 2024/2025

QUOTAS ARE OUR BEST ESTIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Date	Acres Flooded	2024-25 Hunter Quota	2023-24 Hunter Quota
Opening Day	1601	75	75
November 1	1601	75	75
December 1	2156	100	100
January l	2415	120	120



LBWA F19A (BIG)



LBWA 17C

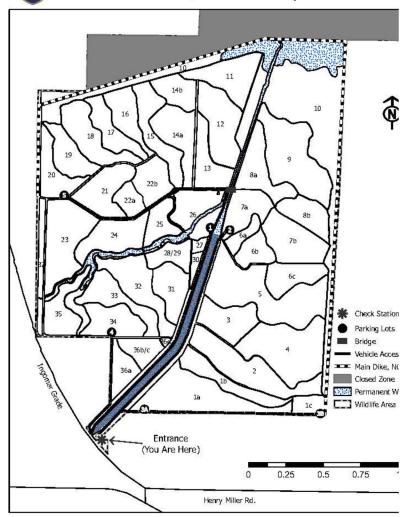


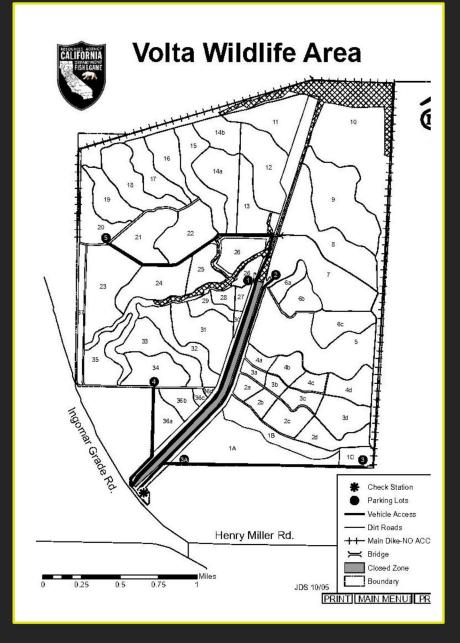
VOLTA WA HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES 2023/2024

- Wetland Acreage should be 100% of a normal year and flooded like the previous years.
- Fields 36A and 36B out of Parking Lot 4 were recontoured.
- The back levee along Field 14B 15, and 16 was redone and the swales in those fields recontoured.
- Fields 2 ABCD, 3 ABCD and 4 ABCD have been reconfigured and are now Fields 2, 3, and 4. (See map to follow)
- CDFW Nutria Eradication Program was hard at work this year. Staff removed 41 nutria from field 10, 6 in the Tri-Valley Drain, 21 in field 26, and 30 in field 35. A total of 98 nutria captured at Volta.
- Field 10 was also disked this summer, opening it up for better food production next summer.



Volta Wildlife Area Waterfowl Hunt Map



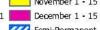


Volta 2024 Flood-up Schedule Los Banos Wildlife Area

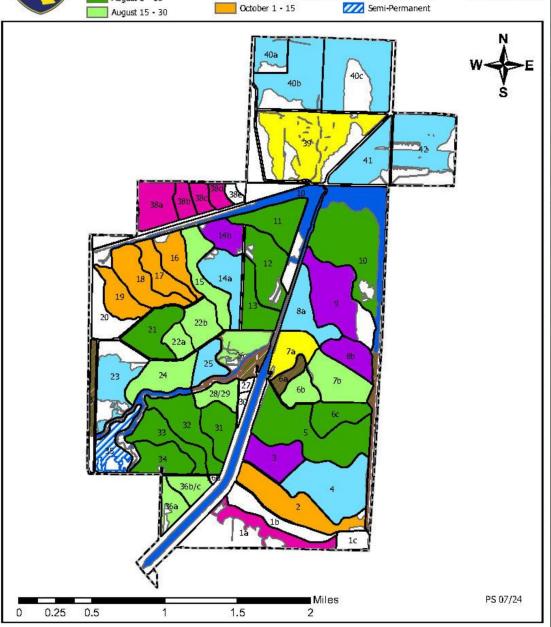












VOLTA WA HUNTER QUOTAS 2024/2025

QUOTAS ARE OUR BEST ESTIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Date	Acres Flooded	2024-25 Hunter Quota	2023-24 Hunter Quota	
Opening Day	1990	100	100	
November 1	2328	115	115	
December l	2499	135	135	
January l	January 1		135	

MUD SLOUGH UNIT LOS BANOS WA HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES 2022/2023

- All units received spring irrigations. Watergrass in 5A and 5B received 3 irrigations.
- Some spot discing occurred in Field 1A and 2A.
- Area will not be available on opening day.
 Scheduled to open Saturday, November 23.
- The area should be completely flooded by early December and all blinds should be available.

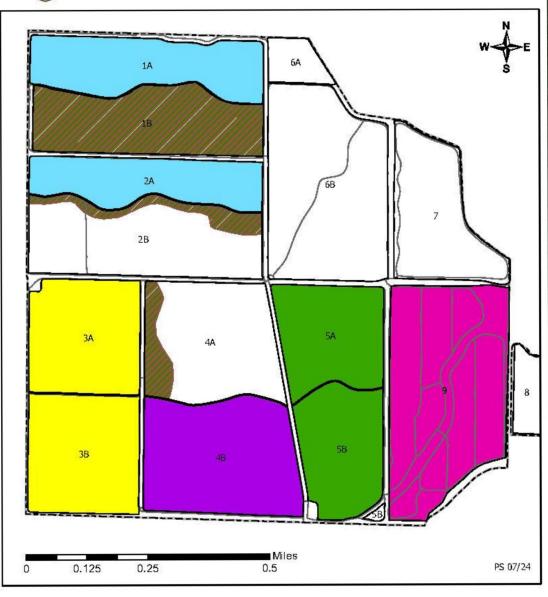
CALIFORNIA OFFISH & WILDLIFE WILDLIFE

Mud Slough Unit 2024 Flood-up Schedule Los Banos Wildlife Area





Not Flooded



MUD SLOUGH UNIT LOS BANOS WA HUNTER QUOTAS 2024/2025

QUOTAS ARE OUR BEST ESTIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Date	Acres Flooded	2024-25 Hunter Quota	2023-24 Hunter Quota	
Opening Day	0	0	0	
November 1	116	Opens Nov.23rd 14	14	
December 1	176	18	18	
January l	January 1 284		18	

NORTH GRASSLANDS WILDLIFE AREA COMPLEX

Raymond Cotta Manager, NGWAC

Salt Slough Unit Gadwall Unit China Island Unit



SALT SLOUGH UNIT NORTH GRASSLANDS WA HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES 2023/2024

- Staff irrigated 550 acres of watergrass and 200 acres of swamp timothy.
- Zone 13 Blinds will be open for hunting the first Saturday in December. Blinds 13-1 and 13-3 are still closed.
- Parking Lot C was expanded to accommodate 10 additional vehicles for Dove Season.
- 75 horsepower pump that lifts riparian water rights water was upgraded and fitted with a variable speed motor. Thank you Ducks Unlimited.
- The 15 horsepower riparian rights pump that services the dove fields and Field 2 and Field 8 wetlands was replace with a new unit. Thank you, California Waterfowl Association.
- Seasonal staff removed the collapsed barns expanding the parking on the Main lot.
- New gravel was laid along the main road from Wolfsen Rd to a $\frac{1}{2}$ miles short of Lot B.

Salt Slough Unit 2024 Flood-up Schedule North Grasslands Wildlife Area Not Flooded Flood Date July 1 - July 15 September 1 - 15 December 1 - 15 September 15 - 30 Semi-Permanent August 1 - 15 November 15 - 30 Permanent

0.25 0.5

1.5

2

PS 07/24

SALT SLOUGH UNIT NORTH GRASSLANDS WA HUNTER QUOTAS 2024/2025

QUOTAS ARE OUR BEST ESTIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Date	Acres Flooded	2024-25 Hunter Quota	2023-24 Hunter Quota	
Opening Day	677	40	40	
November 1	722	40	40	
December 1	948	55	55	
January l	January 1		55	



SALT SLOUGH FIELD 13



SALT SLOUGH FIELD 28



CHINA ISLAND UNIT NORTH GRASSLANDS WA HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES 2023/2024

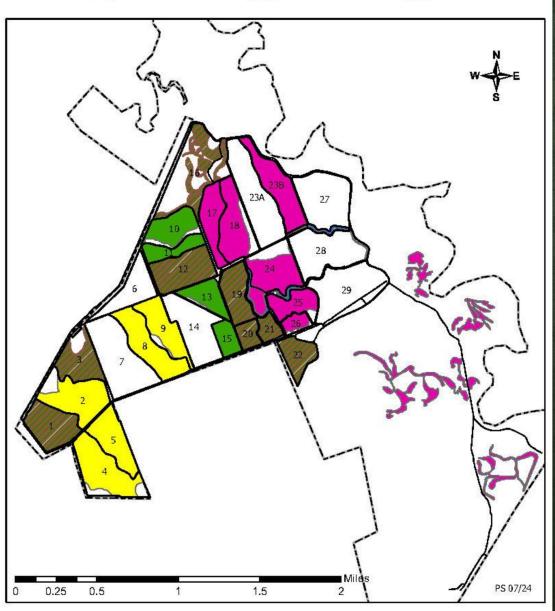
- 160 acres of new watergrass was planted in Fields 10, 17, 18 and 23B
- China Island will have a delayed opener and will be open to hunting on opening weekend of pheasant season (November 9th).
- Watergrass Fields 5 and 8 received several irrigations and are looking good.
- Field 24 underwent a major rehabilitation and will not be flooded this year.
 Barley will be planted to discourage a large infestation of jointgrass.
- A half mile of new gravel was laid on the main road from the main lot to the J Lateral.
- The J Lateral was completely cleaned of sediment and all expansion joints were cleaned of debris and sealed with elastomeric sealer to prevent damage and leaks.

CALIFORNIA FISH & WILDLIFE

China Island Unit 2024 Flood-up Schedule

North Grasslands Wildlife Area





CHINA ISLAND UNIT NORTH GRASSLANDS WA HUNTER QUOTAS 2024/2025

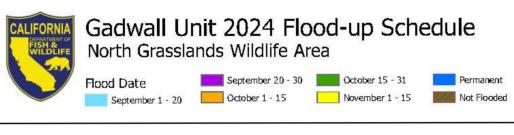
QUOTAS ARE OUR BEST ESTIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

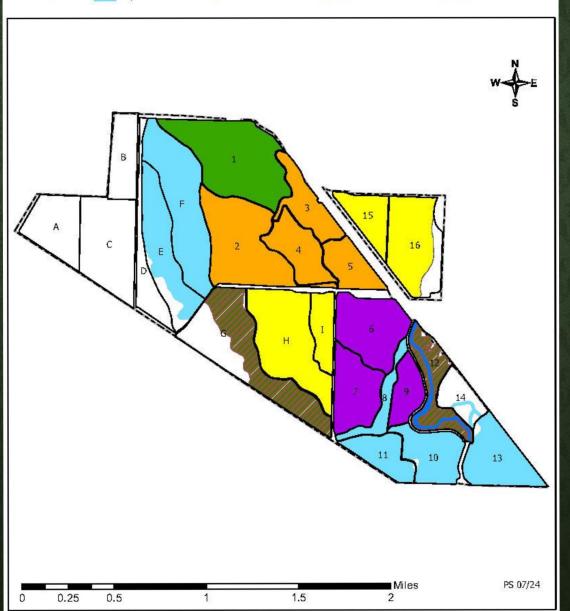
Date	Acres Flooded	2024-25 Hunter Quota	2023-24 Hunter Quota		
Opening Day	146	0	0		
November 9	290	40 includes Upland Hunters	40		
December l	488	40	30		
January l	574	40	40		

GADWALL UNIT NORTH GRASSLANDS WA HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES 2023/2024

- 400 acres of Azola infested wetlands were flushed last spring. Several factors contributed to Azola taking over many ponds. We hope to not have this occur this year by not flooding several of the most severely impacted fields as early as we did last year.
- Gravel was laid around Blinds in Fields 3, 5, and 11 to help prevent the blind islands from eroding. Additionally, gravel was placed around the ADA Blind out of Parking Lot D for more stable footing for the mobility impaired users.
- Rebuilt ADA blind in Field 6. The blind has new footings and flooring and is much more stable than last season.
- A mile of drain ditch paralleling Highway 152 was excavated to facilitate better drainage. Thank you, CWA, for your assistance.
- The area received water starting on August 27 in field 7, 8, and 11. This is two weeks later than last season. The area will still be flooded for opening day with a full hunter quota.

^{*} Gadwall Zone F will not open until the first week of December.





GADWALL UNIT NORTH GRASSLANDS WA HUNTER QUOTAS 2024/2025

QUOTAS ARE OUR BEST ESTIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Date	Acres Flooded In Hunt Area	2024-25 Hunter Quota	2023-24 Hunter Quota
Opening Day	457	24	0
November 1	615	24	0
December l	860	33	33
January l	860	33	33

Area Name	Season	# of Hunter Visits	# of Ducks	# of Geese	# of Coots	Total Waterfowl Shot	Average Waterfowl	Adult Hunters	Junior Hunters	# of Snipe	# of Pheasant
China	2023	783	746	24	4	774	0.99	731	52	6	14
Island	2022	956	2,679	68	13	2,760	2.89	902	54	6	5
Gadwall	2023	870	1,041	16	5	1,062	1.22	820	50	13	3
	2022	1,200	5,222	34	4	5,260	4.38	1,099	101	3	0
Los Banos	2023	4,237	4,104	137	46	4,287	1.01	3,853	384	12	120
	2022	4,891	11,204	320	159	11,683	2.39	4,433	458	9	22
Merced	2023	952	1,149	246	6	1,401	1.47	926	26	0	0
	2022	811	2,173	433	12	2,618	3.23	784	27	0	0
North	2023	615	1,350	3	0	1,353	2.20	597	18	0	0
Freitas	2022	228	429	11	0	440	1.93	219	9	0	0
South	2023	364	630	14	0	644	1.77	350	14	0	0
Freitas	2022	277	595	88	0	683	2.47	275	2	0	0
Salt Slough	2023	1,555	1,393	38	32	1,463	0.00	1,474	81	5	15
	2022	1,926	5,346	56	34	5,436	2.82	1,808	118	1	6
San Luis	2023	3,384	5,834	150	81	6,065	0.00	3,176	208	52	12
	2022	2,641	6,695	85	32	6,812	2.58	2,519	122	6	3
Volta	2023	2,649	4,556	7	62	4,625	1.75	2,512	137	69	3
	2022	3,077	9,851	37	67	9,955	3.24	2,888	189	32	2
Yolo	2023	7,064	10,056	304	497	10,857	1.54	6,790	274	174	300
	2022	6,350	13,938	638	254	14,830	2.34	6,085	265	95	263
West Bear	2023	838	1,509	83	0	1,592	1.90	774	64	0	0
Creek	2022	240	700	58	2	760	3.17	222	18	0	0
Annual Total	2023	18,986	26,327	811	287	27,425	1.44	17,807	1,179	157	168
	2022	18,325	50,513	1,319	348	52,180	2.85	17,107	1,218	58	38
92			V					· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			

BE OUR EYES WHILE YOU ARE IN THE FIELD





Report any dead or sick waterfowl in a group of 5 or more.

■ Call our office LBWA (209)826-0463; Mendota (559)655-4645 or report your observations to check station staff as soon as possible.

THANKS

- To the Agencies and organizations for participating.
- Special thanks to Grasslands Water District for their tireless efforts in securing water supplies for the wetlands of the Central Valley and specifically the Grasslands Ecological Area.
- To you, our Public for participating in this information exchange

QUESTIONS FOUND IN THE CHAT FROM THE MEETING

