

# California Department of Fish and Wildlife

## Region 4 Type A Wildlife Area Spring Public Outreach Meeting

### March 25, 2025, 5pm-8pm

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- 5:00** Introductions and Meeting Parameters
- 5:10** 2025 – 2026 Waterfowl Season Averages and Overview (Lara Sparks, CDFW)
- 5:30** USFWS San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex Updates (Jack Sparks, USFWS)
- 5:50** Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program Updates (Luke Matthews, CDFW)
- 6:10** Habitat and Facility Projects for Summer 2026 (Preston Brunk, CWA; Matt Kaminski, DU)
- 6:25** **\*Break**
- 6:35** Statewide Hunt Program Updates (CDFW)
- 6:50** Presentation on CDFW Central Region's Wetland Habitat Conditions and Updates on Public Use
  - Los Banos WA-** Lara Sparks, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor, CDFW
  - North Grasslands-** Raymond Cotta, Wildlife Habitat Supervisor I, CDFW
  - Mendota WA-** Pritesh Patel, Environmental Scientist, CDFW
- 7:30** Public Comments, Recommendations, and Panel Discussion
- 7:55** Wrap up
- 8:00** **Adjourn**

If we cannot answer all questions during the time allotted, please email them to:  
[LosBanosWA@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:LosBanosWA@wildlife.ca.gov) and they will be routed to appropriate staff for answers.



**NORTHERN SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY  
WILDLIFE AREA  
PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING**

*03/25/2026*

# FISH AND GAME CODE

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- **FISH AND GAME CODE**
- **DIVISION 2. DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME [700 - 1958]**
- **CHAPTER 7.5. Native Species Conservation and Enhancement [1750 - 1773]**
- **ARTICLE 2.5. Bird Habitat Conservation [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.)*



# WATERFOWL HUNT RESULTS SUMMARY

**PRESENTED BY:**

Lara Sparks – Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor

# 2025 Waterfowl Hunt Results

Area	Hunters	Ducks	Geese	Total Waterfowl (including Coots)	Average Waterfowl
Los Banos	3534 (4251)	4019 (5203)	202 (161)	4244 (5433)	1.20 (1.28)
Volta	2375 (2800)	4776 (7198)	25 (14)	4852 (7332)	2.04 (2.62)
Salt Slough	1731 (1704)	2372 (2396)	217 (168)	2594 (2584)	1.50 (1.52)
Gadwall	858 (1004)	1474 (2298)	38 (11)	1529 (2319)	1.78 (2.31)
China	981 (791)	1239 (757)	93 (73)	1339 (848)	1.36 (1.07)
San Luis	3297 (3138)	6128 (5220)	258 (202)	6418 (5478)	1.95 (1.75)
Kesterson	2519 (2436)	4165 (3826)	182 (96)	4395 (3975)	1.74 (1.63)
Bear Creek	856 (838)	2159 (1391)	132 (117)	2292 (1517)	2.68 (1.81)
Merced	828 (792)	1036 (1062)	542 (269)	1592 (1355)	1.92 (1.71)
North Freitas	651 (612)	975 (1150)	26 (0)	1001 (1150)	1.54 (1.88)
South Freitas	77 (244)	89 (438)	15 (17)	104 (455)	1.35 (1.86)
<b>Total</b>	<b>17707 (18610)</b>	<b>28432 (30939)</b>	<b>1730 (1128)</b>	<b>30360 (32446)</b>	<b>1.71 (1.74)</b>

\* 2024 results in parentheses

## 2025 Veteran Hunt Results

Area	Hunters	Total Waterfowl (including Coots)	Average Waterfowl
Los Banos	25 (47)	37 (195)	1.48 (4.15)
Volta	28 (28)	72 (128)	2.57 (4.57)
Salt Slough	16 (19)	30 (75)	1.88 (3.95)
Gadwall	2 (20)	10 (71)	5.00 (3.55)
China	0 (3)	0 (22)	0.00 (7.33)
San Luis	15 (19)	20 (66)	1.33 (3.47)
Kesterson	16 (19)	34 (50)	2.13 (2.63)
Bear Creek	8 (9)	26 (46)	3.25 (5.11)
Merced	5 (11)	6 (55)	1.20 (5.00)
North Freitas	0 (1)	0 (7)	0.00 (7.00)
South Freitas	0 (1)	0 (11)	0.00 (11.00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>115 (177)</b>	<b>235 (726)</b>	<b>2.04 (4.10)</b>

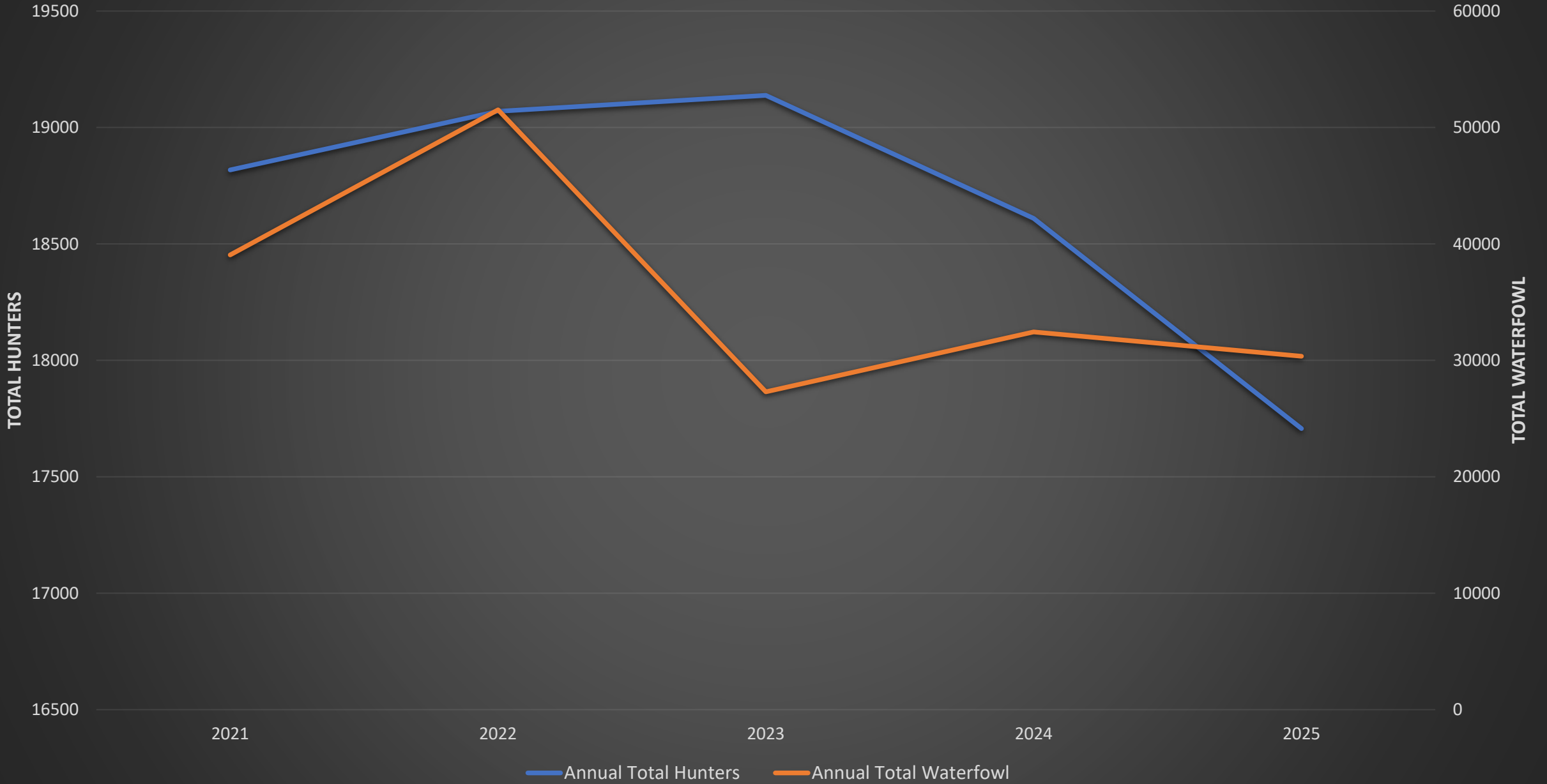
\* 2024 results in parentheses

## 2025 Youth Hunt Results

Area	Hunters	Total Waterfowl (including Coots)	Average Waterfowl
Los Banos	37 (35)	109 (35)	2.95 (1.00)
Volta	16 (34)	39 (77)	2.44 (2.26)
Salt Slough	30 (17)	89 (67)	2.97 (3.94)
Gadwall	15 (31)	26 (92)	1.73 (2.97)
China	6 (6)	7 (8)	1.17 (1.33)
San Luis	34 (24)	92 (27)	2.71 (1.13)
Kesterson	30 (35)	53 (45)	1.77 (1.29)
Bear Creek	24 (14)	44 (24)	1.83 (1.71)
Merced	9 (9)	53 (22)	5.89 (2.44)
North Freitas	4 (4)	4 (4)	1.00 (1.00)
South Freitas	0 (1)	0 (6)	0.00 (6.00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>205 (210)</b>	<b>516 (407)</b>	<b>2.52 (1.94)</b>

\* 2024 results in parentheses

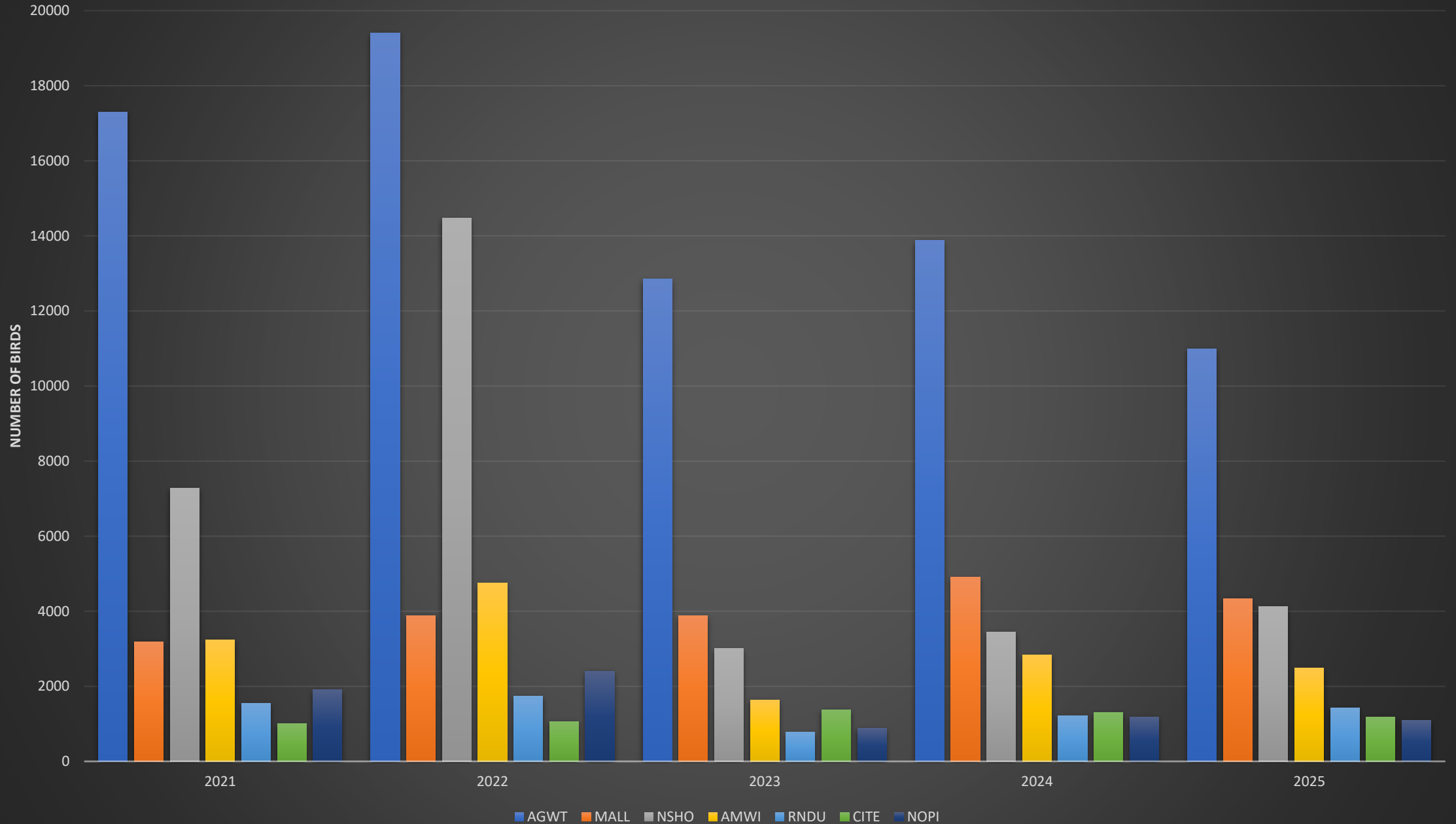
# Annual Total Hunters and Waterfowl



# Waterfowl Averages 2021 – 2025

Area	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Los Banos	1.79	2.28	0.98	1.28	1.20
Volta	2.67	3.15	1.74	2.62	2.04
Salt Slough	2.13	2.67	0.91	1.52	1.50
Gadwall	3.20	4.27	1.20	2.31	1.78
China	1.36	2.95	1.06	1.07	1.36
San Luis	1.80	2.47	1.75	1.75	1.95
Kesterson	1.79	2.63	1.52	1.63	1.74
Bear Creek	2.38	3.07	1.85	1.81	2.68
Merced	2.94	2.94	1.48	1.71	1.92
North Freitas	1.21	1.82	2.23	1.88	1.54
South Freitas	1.12	2.45	1.76	1.86	1.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.08</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>1.71</b>

# Species Composition



# San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex

## Hunt Program Update – Spring 2026

**Jack Sparks, Refuge Manager/Hunt Coordinator, San Luis NWR – [jack\\_sparks@fws.gov](mailto:jack_sparks@fws.gov)**

**Gabriel Sandoval, Refuge Manager, Merced NWR – [gabriel\\_sandoval@fws.gov](mailto:gabriel_sandoval@fws.gov)**

**Brandon Jordan, Facility Operations Specialist – [brandon\\_Jordan@fws.gov](mailto:brandon_Jordan@fws.gov)**

**Chris Harper, Project Leader – [chris\\_harper@fws.gov](mailto:chris_harper@fws.gov)**

7376 S. Wolfsen Rd, Los Banos (209) 826-3508



## Previous Season Recap

The number of hunt visits on refuge lands was nearly equal to last year, with exception of South Freitas

Hunter success was nearly equal or slightly higher than last year

## Water and Flood-up Forecast

- **100% Level 2 water supply; incremental Level 4 uncertain**
- **Expecting flood-up to be similar to last year**
- **A full Level 2 water supply does mean optimal/full wetland flood-up**
  - We lose water to the ground – it takes more water to flood than previously
    - Years of drought have taken a toll
    - The old river channel through San Luis experiences less water now – previously, water in river helped maintain the water table, which aided in flood-up; C-canal runs parallel to the river
  - Water conservation practices in agriculture have resulted in:
    - Less water available to lift from Salt Slough
    - Less “free” water available to grab
    - Less water in the river early in the season (San Luis River Zone)
  - Reduced ability to augment with pumps due to costs
  - Reduced ability to keep up with canal maintenance/cleaning with current staffing



# Habitat Management

## Total Rehab

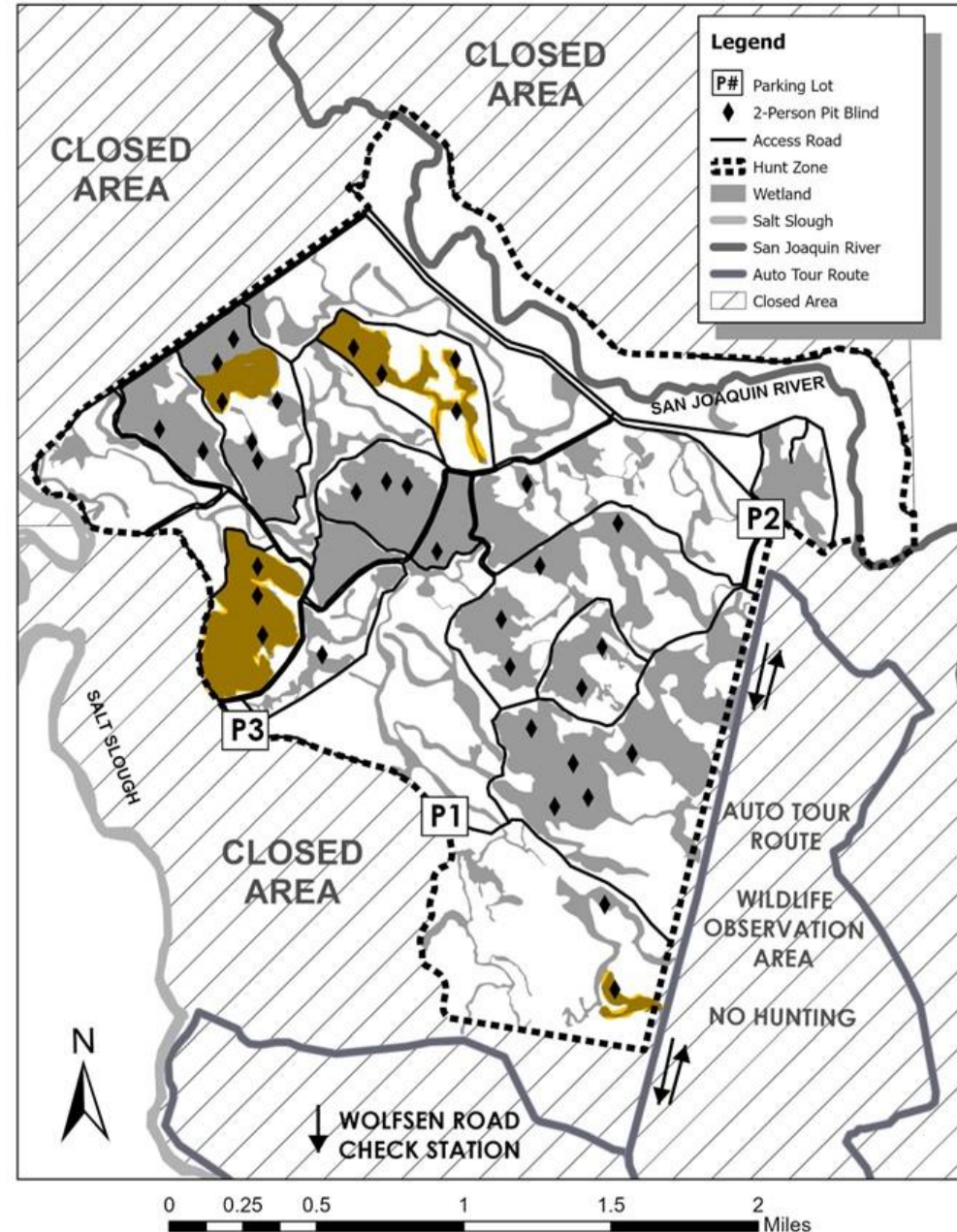
### San Luis

Moffit 3 (south)

Moffit 5

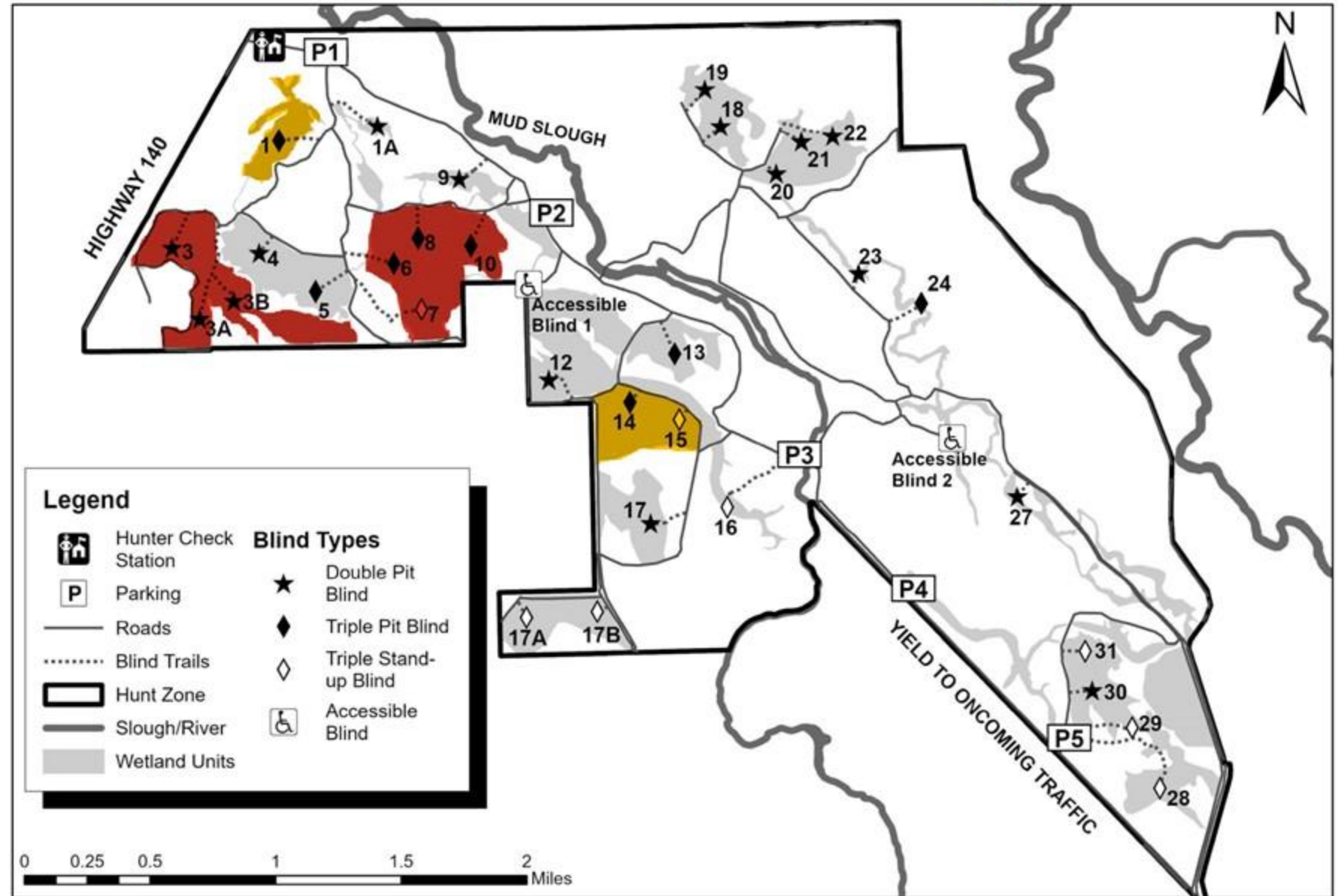
Moffit 8

Yokuts South



# KESTERSON UNIT HUNT MAP SAN LUIS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

● Rehab 2026  
● Spot Disk 2026



## Kesterson

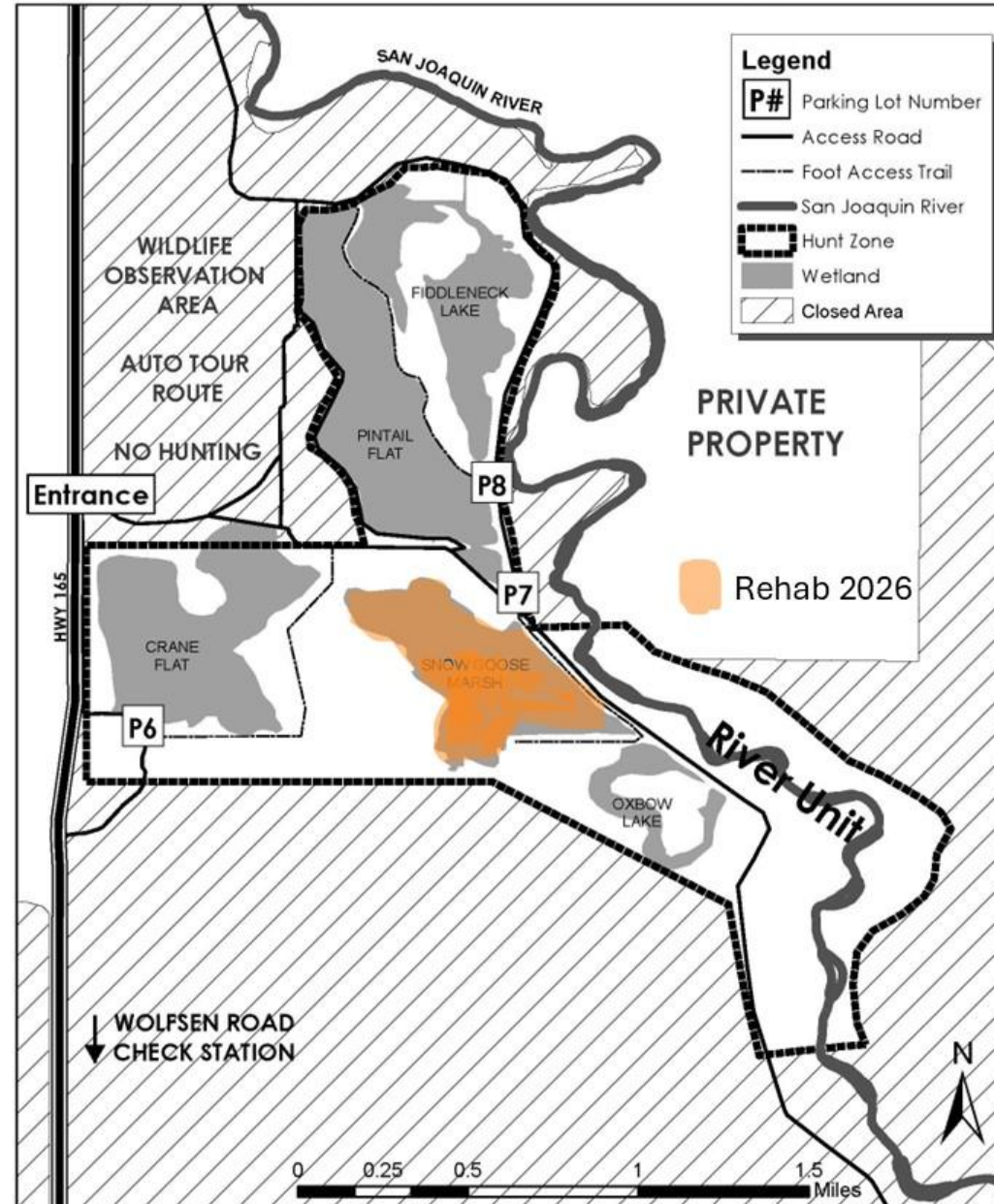
North Teal – Rehab

Rail Pond – Rehab

West Teal – spot disk

Sprig Lake – spot disk

# WEST BEAR CREEK UNIT HUNT MAP SAN LUIS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



## West Bear Creek

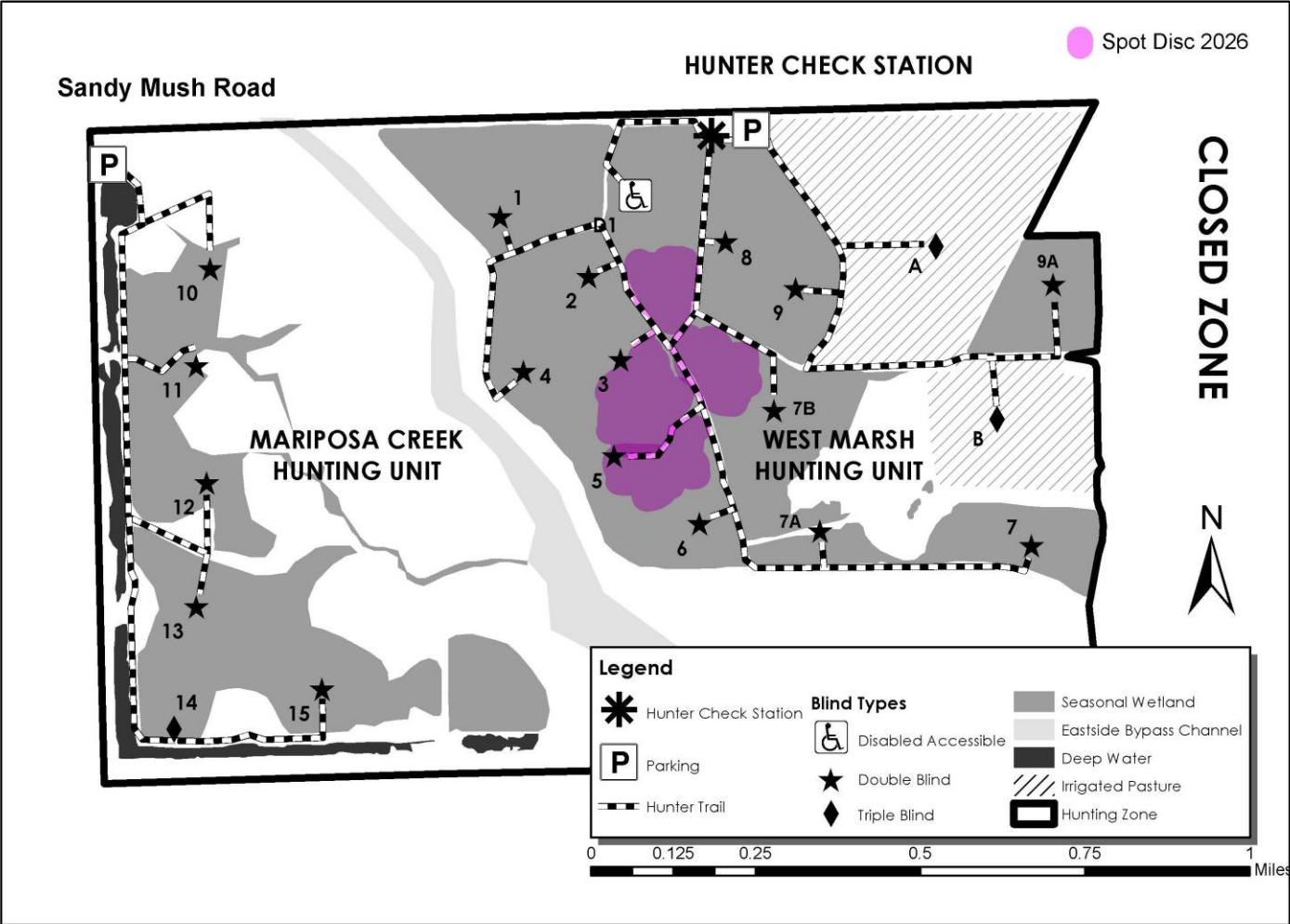
Snow Goose – Rehab

## East Bear Creek

Channel 1 East (sanctuary) – Rehab

# Habitat Management

## MERCED NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HUNT MAP



## News and Upcoming Changes

- **Early conversations about adding hunted species ~2 years out**
  - **Mourning Dove** (Sept 1-15 early season only) at West Bear Creek, East Bear Creek, Upland Freitas, Kesterson, and Lonetree
  - **Rabbit/Hare** (July 1 – September 15 only) at Kesterson and Upland Freitas
- **Merced NWR – Early conversations with DU about projects to improve water efficiency and flood-up**
- **Freitas Hyacinth – Able to use invasives funding last year to spot treat; Treatment access has limitations; similar effort this year**
- **Kesterson – Replacing fiberglass Blinds 3A and 3B with concrete (2 person)**
- **Blind clean-up dates TBD in August or September**

# Thank you!

**Jack Sparks, Refuge Manager/Hunt Coordinator, San Luis NWR – [jack\\_sparks@fws.gov](mailto:jack_sparks@fws.gov)**

**Gabriel Sandoval, Refuge Manager, Merced NWR – [gabriel\\_sandoval@fws.gov](mailto:gabriel_sandoval@fws.gov)**

**Brandon Jordan, Facility Operations Specialist – [brandon\\_jordan@fws.gov](mailto:brandon_jordan@fws.gov)**

**Chris Harper, Project Leader – [chris\\_harper@fws.gov](mailto:chris_harper@fws.gov)**

For maps, quota information, and more:

[fws.gov/refuge/san-luis/san-luis-nwr-hunt-program](https://fws.gov/refuge/san-luis/san-luis-nwr-hunt-program)



# Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program

2026 Region 4 Outreach

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# Program Creation

## **AB 2697 (2018)**

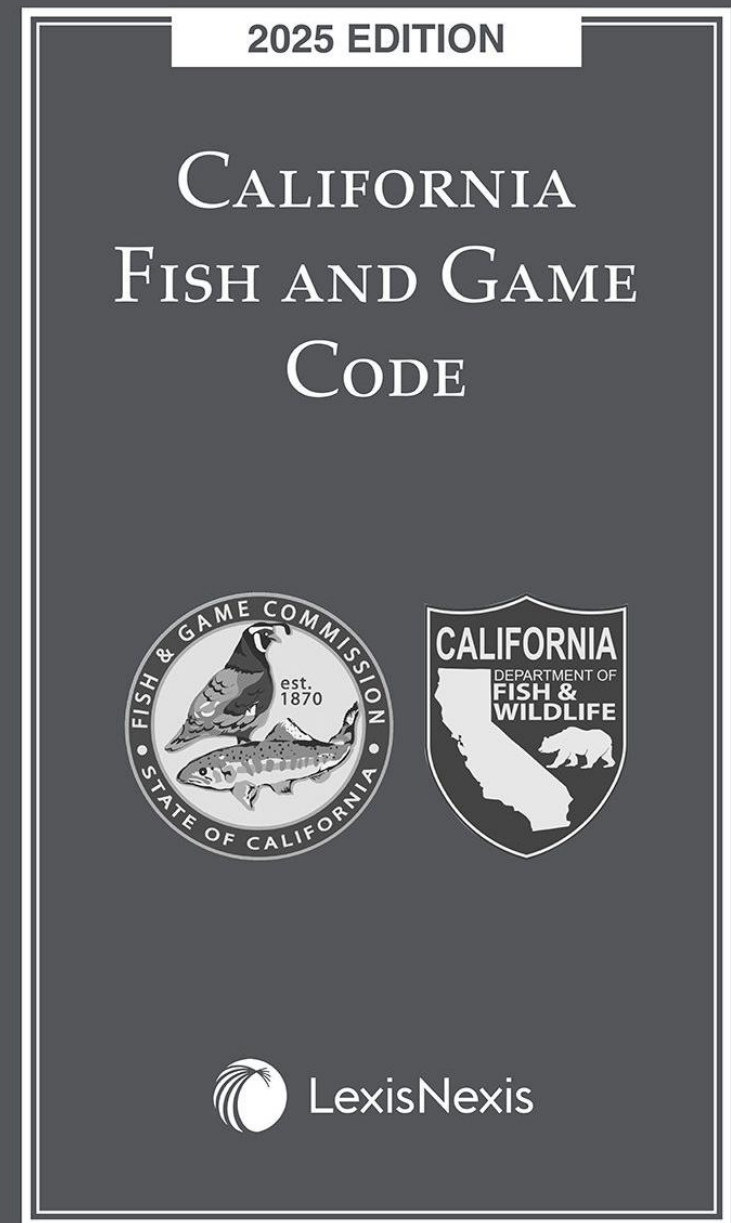
- Program Creation
- Effort lead by CWA and CDFW

## **AB 614 (2021)**

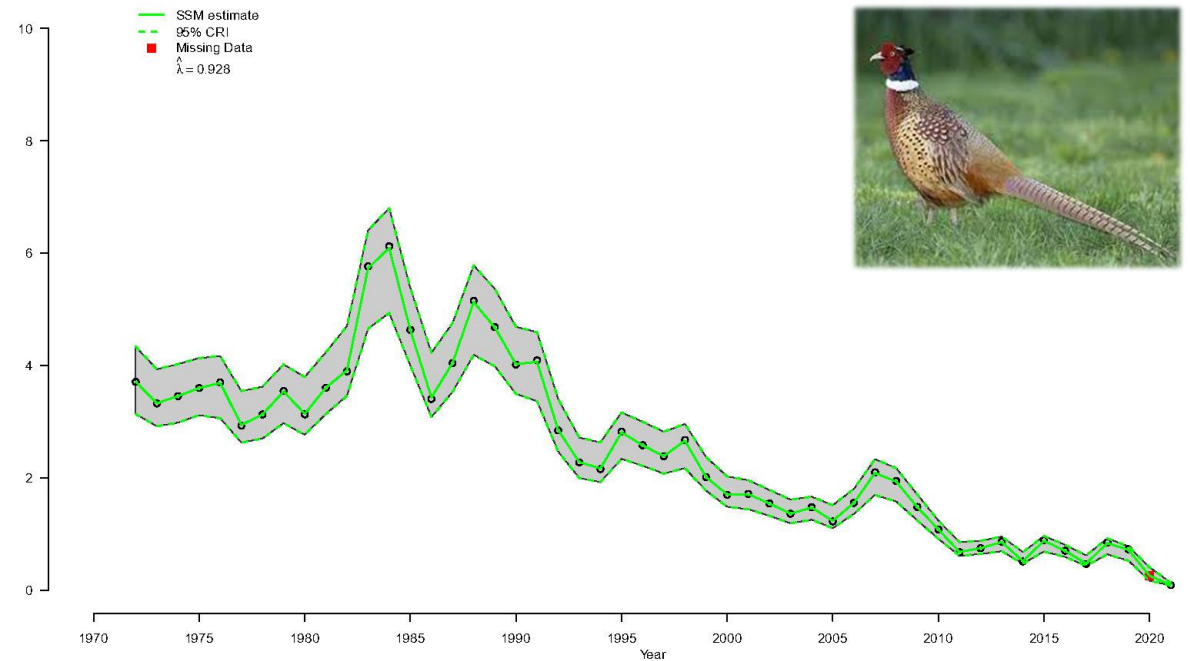
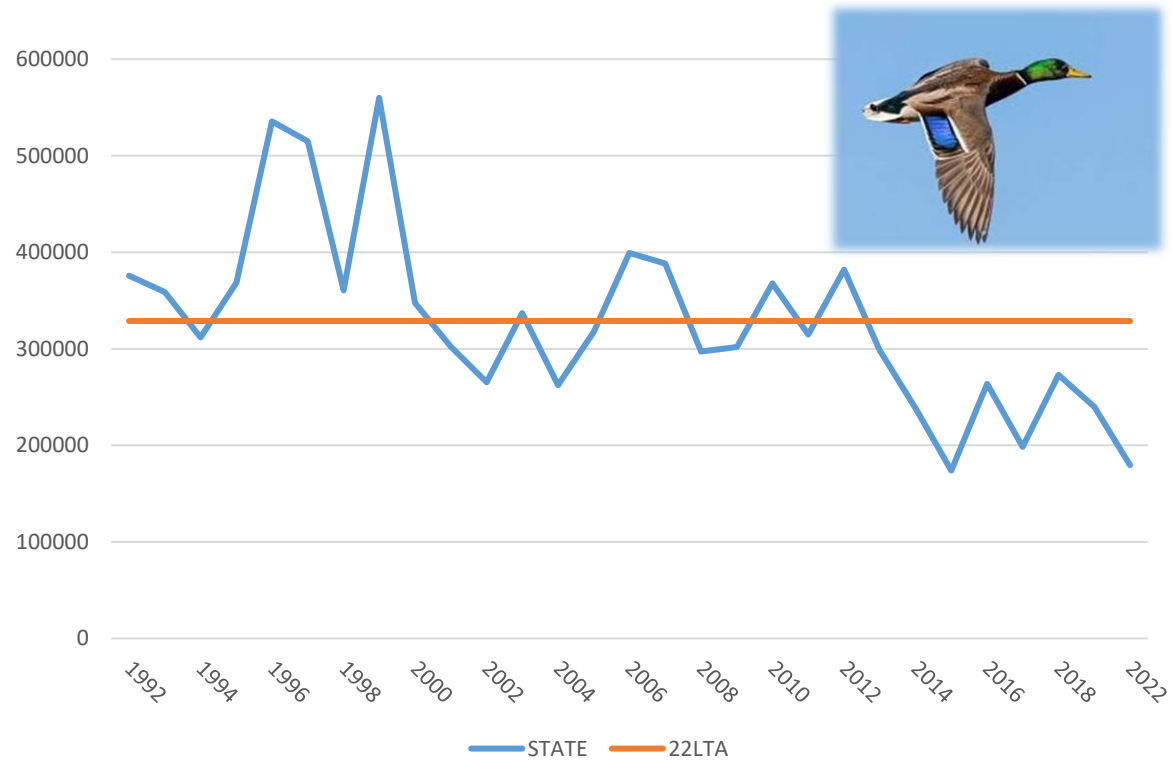
- Program Funding
- Administrative Amendments
- Effort Lead by CWA, CRC and CDFW

## **Fish and Game Code**

- Chapter 2, Part 1, Division 4,  
Article 9, Section 3480



# Why Focus on Upland Habitat



# Program Justification

- Alarming trends in population declines for Mallard and Pheasant
- Landscape in the Central Valley has changed dramatically since the early 90s
  - **70%** reduction of cereal grains (CVJV 2020)
  - **20%** reduction of field crops (CVJV 2020)
  - **35%** increase of urbanization (Waterfowl Edoc 2023)
  - **332%** increase in tree nuts (USDA 2025)
  - Clean farming has reduced available habitat on edges and corridors





# Funding

- Hunters Paying for Conservation
- Fees Generate \$2,000,000 Annually
- [wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Statistics](http://wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Statistics)

## Hunting

Items Reported by License Year  
AS OF 12/31/2025

Licenses	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Non-Resident Antelope Tag Drawing Application	656	729	830	898	885	857	-	-
Resident Bighorn Sheep Tag Drawing Application	18,652	18,672	19,107	19,094	18,437	16,840	-	-
Non-Resident Bighorn Sheep Tag Drawing Application	1,015	1,084	1,186	1,248	1,234	1,184	-	-
Resident Elk Tag Drawing Application	44,273	44,503	44,364	44,442	43,115	39,173	-	-
Non-Resident Elk Tag Drawing Application	998	1,092	1,247	1,330	1,338	1,302	-	-
Elk, Antelope, Bighorn Sheep Tag Return Fee	97	142	27	18	16	19	-	-
<i>Sub Total - Antelope, Bighorn Sheep, Elk Drawing</i>	<i>95,532</i>	<i>96,076</i>	<i>97,152</i>	<i>97,297</i>	<i>94,474</i>	<i>86,442</i>	-	-
Fundraising Deer Tag Random Drawing	27,473	61,753	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundraising Bighorn Sheep Tag Random Drawing	16,557	15,643	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundraising Antelope Tag Random Drawing	10,011	9,210	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundraising Elk Tag Random Drawing	20,906	23,333	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub Total - Fundraising Drawing</i>	<i>74,947</i>	<i>109,939</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Resident Bear Tags	28,521	29,539	31,230	30,625	29,179	29,642	-	-
Resident Bear Tags (Junior)	1,729	1,758	1,799	1,643	1,583	765	-	-
Non-Resident Bear Tags	138	150	221	186	226	242	-	-
<i>Sub Total - Bear Tags</i>	<i>30,388</i>	<i>31,447</i>	<i>33,250</i>	<i>32,454</i>	<i>30,988</i>	<i>30,649</i>	-	-
Resident Wild Pig Tag/Validation**	44,624	41,107	38,989	37,709	34,316	29,088	-	-
Non-Resident Wild Pig Tag/Validation**	1,000	941	1,063	1,092	945	437	-	-
Lifetime Wild Pig Tags/Validation**	8,299	8,436	8,433	8,590	2,649	2,647	-	-
<i>Sub Total - Wild Pig Tags/Validation**</i>	<i>53,923</i>	<i>50,484</i>	<i>48,485</i>	<i>47,391</i>	<i>37,910</i>	<i>32,172</i>	-	-
Duck Validation *	69,631	66,686	62,228	63,510	61,081	55,974	-	-
Collector Duck Stamp	279	315	59	145	161	20	-	-
Lifetime Duck Validation	2,864	2,933	3,010	3,195	3,309	3,275	-	-
Waterfowl Reservation Application	1,238,138	1,240,782	1,065,148	1,133,120	962,035	959,298	-	-
1-Day Type A Wildlife Area Permit	10,102	9,756	10,157	11,573	11,064	7,494	-	-
2-Day Type A Wildlife Area Pass	10,010	10,701	10,400	10,410	10,750	9,277	-	-

# Program Implementation





## Private Land Programs

- Fallow Agricultural Fields
- Delayed Cereal Grain Harvest
- Agricultural Corridors
- Upland Management Agreements

## Public Land Programs

- Upland Enhancements
- Upland Maintenance
- Annual Crops



# 2025 Solicitation

## Overview:

- Funding Available – \$850,000
- Cost of Proposals – \$2,262,550
- Number of Funded Projects – 13
- Funded Project Acres – 1,185

## Public Solicitation Notice Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program Public Lands Funding 2025-26



### Background

#### Program Establishment

The Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program (NBHIP) was established in 2018 by the passing of Assembly Bill (AB) 2697 and was designed to address declines in locally breeding waterfowl and ring-necked pheasant populations. Although the NBHIP was established in Code (Section 3480, Fish and Game Code) in 2018, the program was not funded until the passing of AB 614 in October 2021, which created a \$10 surcharge for the upland game bird and state duck hunting validations. The implementation of these fees generates roughly \$2 million annually, which is deposited into a dedicated Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program Account.

#### Population Declines

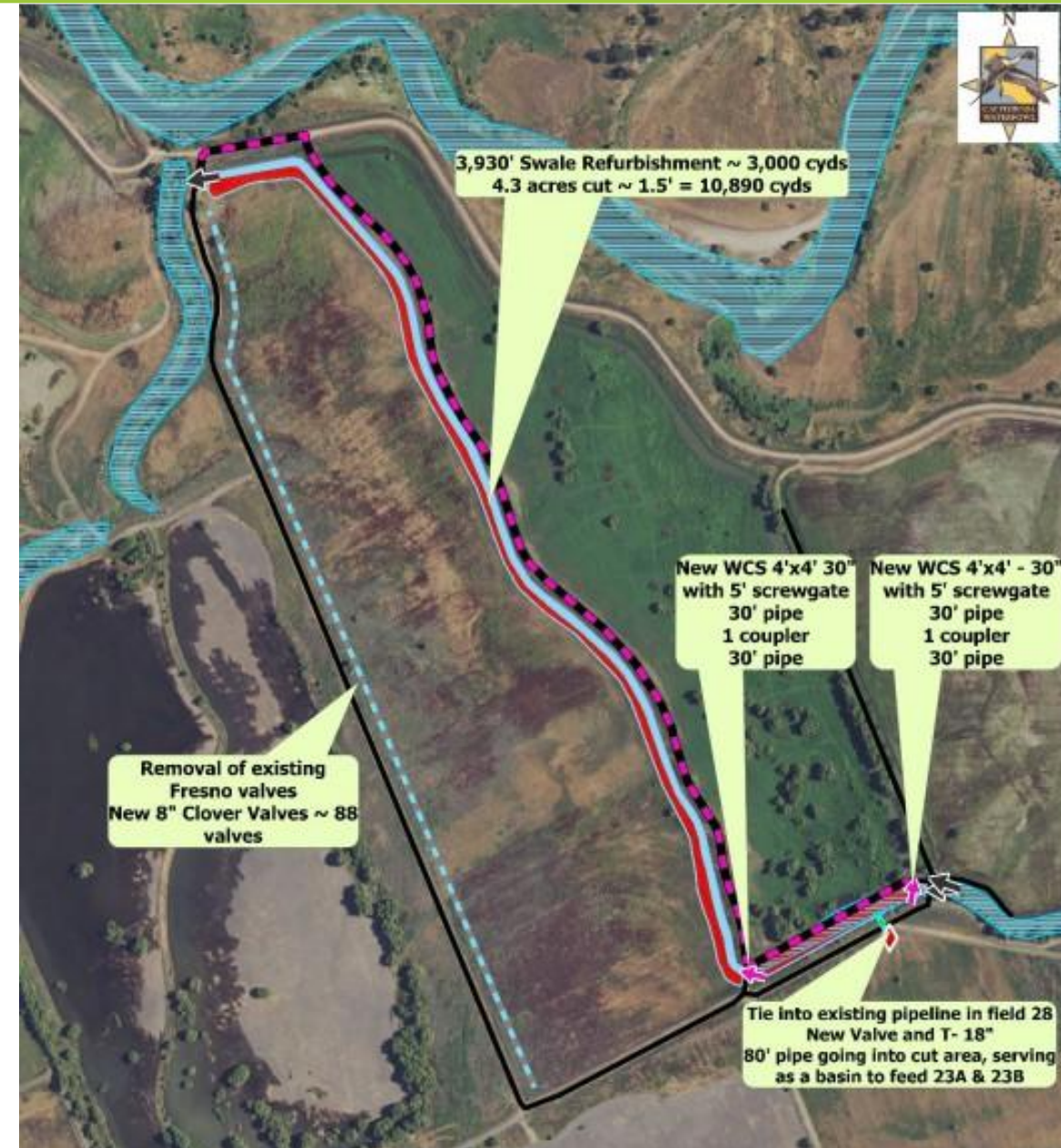
The most common upland nesting waterfowl species in California are mallards, gadwall, and cinnamon teal. These three species comprise a large portion of the annual hunter harvest during the California waterfowl season. Specifically, 60% of mallards, 49% of gadwall, and 53% of cinnamon teal that are harvested in California, were hatched within the state (De Sobrino et al., 2017). Unfortunately, California populations of these three species are experiencing significant declines and are below their long-term average. Statewide, mallards are down 44%, gadwall are down 19%, and cinnamon teal are down 42%, respectively (Central Valley Joint Venture, 2020). Ring-necked pheasants, another upland nesting bird and popular game bird within California, have also experienced substantial population declines (Coates et al., 2017). The loss of quality upland nesting habitat is one of the primary causes of population-level declines for all of these species. In addition to upland breeding bird species, pollinators have declined across much of the United States with some species experiencing significant reductions in both population estimates and range.

#### Loss of Upland Habitats and Beneficial Agriculture

Large-scale changes within the agricultural landscape have been occurring across the Central Valley since the early 1990's that have resulted in a net loss of upland nesting habitat, largely driven by economic factors and changes in federal subsidies. These changes included increased urbanization, increased tree crops, reduced cereal grains and row crops, a functional elimination of sugar beet crops, new water transfer policies, clean farming practices and the elimination of set-aside programs (e.g., rice field fallowing) (CDFW, 2021). Set-aside programs created huge amounts of fallowed croplands across the nation, with nearly 800,000 acres of set-aside in California alone during the 1987 crop year (Central Valley Joint Venture, 1990). When planted with grasses and legumes, these set-aside lands provided high quality nesting habitat and can have over 50 percent nest success (Duebbert & Lokemoen, 1976). Additionally,

# Region 4 Projects

Property	Project	Project Type	Acres	Regional Acres
Ash Creek	N6	Maintenance	320	410.00
Shasta Valley	37, 37A	Restoration or Enhancement	90	
Gray Lodge	Field 58A	Restoration or Enhancement	17	94.00
Gray Lodge	Field 21B	Maintenance	31	
Gray Lodge	Field 27	Restoration or Enhancement	46	
Grizzly	Redhouse	Restoration or Enhancement	30	79.00
Yolo	Parker 2/4	Restoration or Enhancement	49	
China Island	23A	Restoration or Enhancement	61	602.00
China Island	7, 23A	Maintenance	124	
China Island	Field 7	Restoration or Enhancement	63	
Los Banos	56, 66, 67	Maintenance	98	
Mendota	47.1, 47.2	Maintenance	149	
Salt Slough	18B	Restoration or Enhancement	107	
				<b>1,185.00</b>



# 2026 Solicitation

## Overview:

- Funding Available – \$850,000
- Cost of Proposals – \$2,302,982
- Number of Funded Projects – TBD
- Funded Project Acres – TBD

## Public Solicitation Notice Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program Public Lands Funding 2026-27



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# Monitoring and Evaluations

- Biological monitoring conducted by USGS and CWA
  - Nest Searching, Pair Counts and Vegetation Assessments



# Monitoring Results 2025 – Salt Slough

## Overview:

- Mallard – 16
- Gadwall – 1
- American Bittern – 1
- Northern Harrier – 1



# Monitoring Results 2025 – Los Banos

Overview:

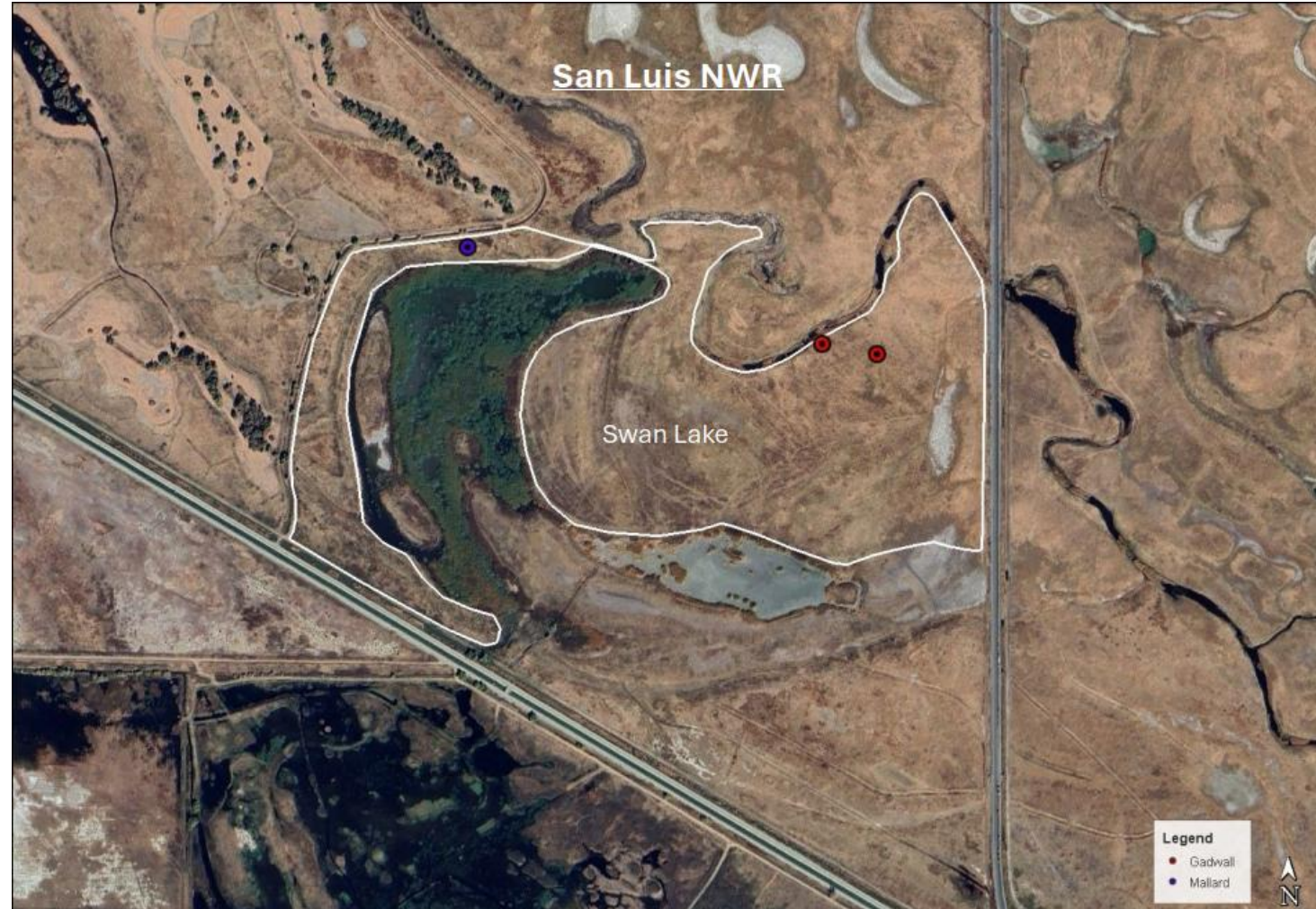
- Mallard – 2



# Monitoring Results 2025 – San Luis (Swan Lake)

## Overview:

- Mallard – 1
- Gadwall – 2



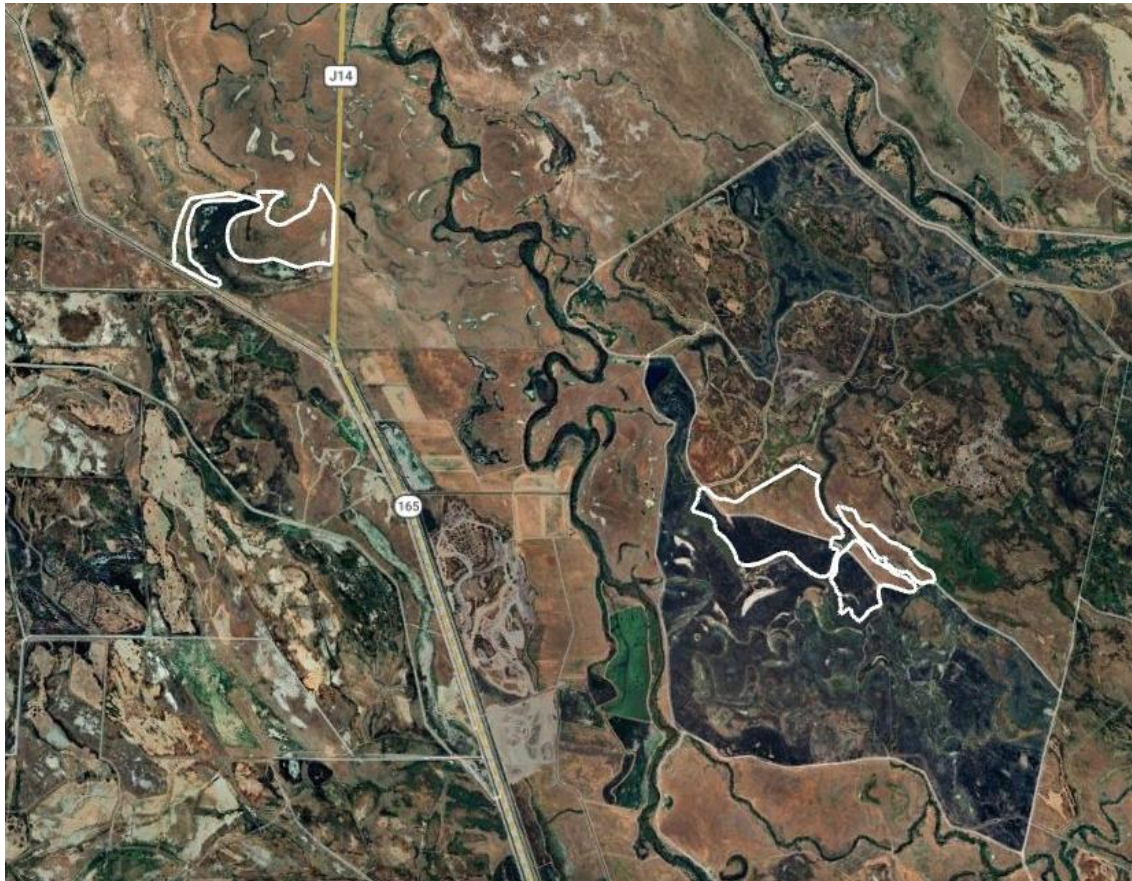
# Monitoring Plan 2026

## Los Banos & North Grasslands



# Monitoring Plan 2026

## San Luis & Mendota



# Questions?

**Luke Matthews**

Cell: (916) 539-3654

[Luke.Matthews@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Luke.Matthews@wildlife.ca.gov)



WETLAND  
CONSERVATION  
PROGRAM



# California Waterfowl Association

Preston Brunk

San Joaquin Valley Regional Biologist



# Drought Relief Funds in the San Joaquin Valley 2025-2026

- **Mendota Drought Relief**
  - \$76,000 spent
  - Hyacinth Removal and Ditch Refurbishment ~ 16,400'
  - Weed Debris Boom Installed – Pump 5 and 10
- **Merced County Drought Relief**
  - \$128,000 spent
  - Los Banos WA swale refurbishment – 19, 24, 65a
    - (64 acres, 3,560')
  - Salt Slough Headwall and Levee Repair
  - Volta LL-1 – Pump Refurbishment
  - Los Banos LL-1 – Pump Refurbishment
- **Statewide Drought Relief**
  - Ditch Cleaning – VWA, LBWA, LBWA-MSU, and NGWA-GU

# **Ground Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program (NBHIP) funds spent 2025-2026**

- NGWA – Salt Sough Unit – 10,11,18B
  - Mowing and Spraying – 213 Acres
  - \$29,748
- Mendota WA – 31-7
  - Seed purchase - \$850



# Projects slated for this summer in the San Joaquin Valley

- ▶ **Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program (NBHIP)**
  - ▶ **Upland Enhancement - 4 projects - \$303,483**
    - ▶ NGWA - China Island Unit - Valve Replacement
    - ▶ China Island Unit 23A - Pipeline Tie In and New Valves
    - ▶ China Island Unit 23A - Earthwork and Structure Installation
    - ▶ Salt Slough 18B – Water control structure and valve installation
  - ▶ **Upland Maintenance – 3 Projects – \$90,995**
    - ▶ China Island Mowing and Spraying 7 and 23A
    - ▶ Los Banos Mowing and Spraying 56,66,67
    - ▶ Mendota Mowing and Spraying 47.1 and 47.2
- ▶ **Habitat Management Agreement- \$50,000**
  - ▶ Disking – VWA and LBWA ~ 280 acres
  - ▶ Ditch Cleaning – 10,035'



# Thank you for your time

- ▶ Any questions? Contact
  - ▶ [pbrunk@calwaterfowl.org](mailto:pbrunk@calwaterfowl.org)
  - ▶ 209-552-6335

# PROJECT UPDATES – DUCKS UNLIMITED

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- San Joaquin River NWR
  - working on permits for floodplain reconnection with River Partners
- Merced NWR
  - NAWCA project – funding secured but will be revised to focus on new swales, levee improvements, and water control structures in West Marsh.
    - Federal funding delayed and extension filed. Construction in Summer 2027.
  - Submitting NAWCA project in Spring 2026 to address other improvements within West Marsh and within Deadman Slough.
  - State funding request for CVPIA improvements related to surface water conveyance – currently under review.
- San Luis NWR – Kesterson Unit
  - NAWCA project – Eagle Ditch extension – in design
    - Federal funding delayed and extension filed. Construction in Summer 2027.
  - State funding request for CVPIA improvements related to surface water conveyance – currently under review.

# PROJECT UPDATES – DUCKS UNLIMITED

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- San Luis NWR – East Bear Creek Unit (in design)
  - Federal funding delayed and extension filed. Construction in Summer 2027.
- Kern NWR
  - New deepwater well in design
    - Federal funding delayed and extension filed. Possible construction in Summer 2027 but likely 2027.
- Pixley NWR
  - Water conveyance improvements – 2026 duck stamp.
    - Under review for funding considerations. Drafting proposal to evaluate CVPIA surface water deliveries.

# PROJECT UPDATES – DUCKS UNLIMITED

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- Volta WA
  - State funding request for CVPIA improvements related to surface water conveyance – currently under review.
- North Grasslands WA – China Island
  - 2025 duck stamp – funding application for new solar array to power traveling screen and new alfalfa valve; tentatively approved but awaiting funding agreement.
- North Grasslands WA – Salt Slough
  - 2023 duck stamp – completed brood pond and seasonal wetland improvements.
- Los Banos WA
  - Recently completed new entrance road.

# PROJECT UPDATES – DUCKS UNLIMITED

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- Los Banos WA – Mud Slough Unit
  - NAWCA - Completed phase I of wetland restoration and enhancement projects in summers 2024 and 2025.
  - Submitted funding request for new re-lift pump as part of phase II as 2026 duck stamp.
  - Will submit new funding request to WCB for other re-lift pump to improve water storage capacity.
- Mendota WA
  - NAWCA – Pump 5 traveling screen – in design.
    - Federal funding delay and extension filed.
    - If extension is received soon, construction in summer 2026 but could be pushed to 2027 if approval is delayed.
  - 2024 duck stamp – new pump 1b completed in fall 2025 and debris barrier installed last week.

# PROJECT UPDATES – DUCKS UNLIMITED

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- Mendota WA (*continued*)
  - Field 46 initially considered for NBHIP, but scope for water delivery and native grass restoration is better to be included in WCB proposal.
  - Submitting revised public lands proposal for road and parking lot improvements.
  - Field 29 brood pond improvements will be part of revised WCB proposal for summer 2026 NAWCA.

# STATEWIDE HUNT PROGRAM UPDATES

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- **Amendments to Section 550, General Regulations for Public Use on All Department of Fish and Wildlife Lands:**

550(b)(19) “Vacancy drawing” is defined as a random drawing or first-come-first-served line for entry onto Type A wildlife areas or national wildlife refuges, to fill vacancies remaining after the reservation processing cutoff time. Hunters may enter only one vacancy drawing per shoot day.

- **Amendments to Section 550.5, Reservations, Entry Permits, Fees, Passes, and Special Use Permits:**

550.5(c)(9) Add additional text to include permits that are issued for successful vacancy drawings, and to include drawings that take place at other department facilities such as check stations.

Any required entry permits will be issued on a first-come, first served basis and/or by a reservation or vacancy drawing to be held at a designated department office or facility. The department shall inform the commission in writing and the public via the news media when limits imposed under this section differ substantially for a specific area from the prior year. Such notification shall include: the land affected; the time period; the reason for the limitation or closure; the number of entry permits to be issued; and the method of issuance.



# LOS BANOS WILDLIFE AREA COMPLEX

*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'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area*

## **PRESENTED BY:**

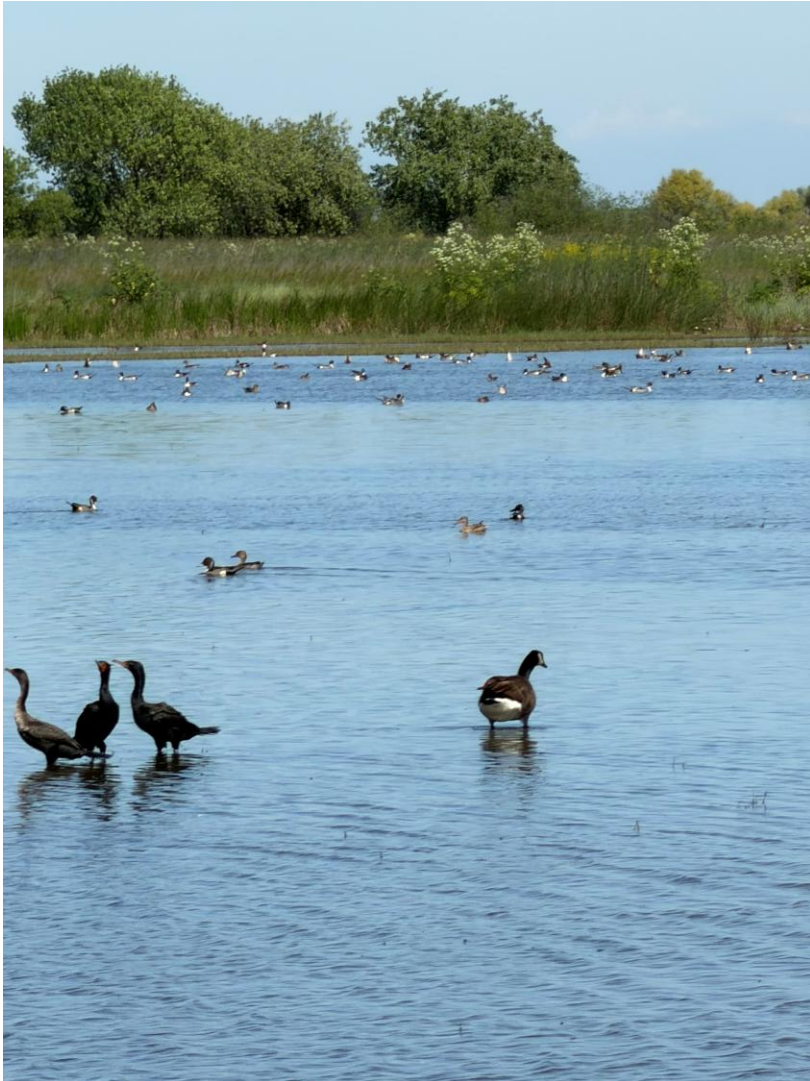
Lara Sparks – Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor

# CDFW General Updates

- Water Allocations
  - Level 2 water supply at 100%
  - Level 4 water most likely similar to last year
- Flood up schedules will be very similar to last year
- Reinstating the Grassland Habitat Management Coordination Committee with Grassland Water District, US Fish & Wildlife Service and CDFW.



# Los Banos WA Updates

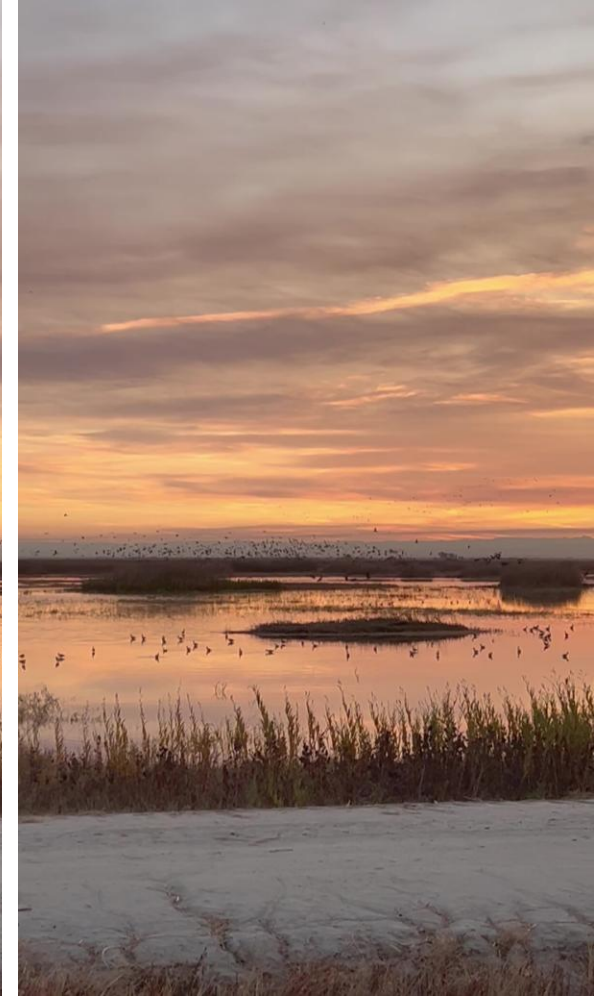


- Grazing with cattle and sheep continues for a second year.
- Brood water in fields 5C, 17A, 67E, as well as semi-permanent fields.
- Field rehab in several fields to take them back to early succession.
- Contract to help disk fields that were summer water last year, such as 36F and 26B.
- Blind updates:
  - Cut channel for ADA Blind 9
  - Move and possibly change to floating blind for ADA Blind 17
  - Looking to change a couple blinds to be 3-person
- Continuing to work on invasive weed control
  - Hyacinth in Ruth Lake and Boundary Drain
  - Phragmites in Field 4B
  - Pepperweed

# Volta WA Updates

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- Brood water in fields 1A, 7A, and 38 A, B, C, D
- Field rehab in 21, 36 A and B/C to take them back to early succession.
- Contract diking in field 10.



# Mud Slough Unit Updates

- All units will receive spring irrigations.
- Field rehab in 2A to take them back to early succession.
- Move Blind 3A to improve access to bird flight.





# NORTH GRASSLANDS WILDLIFE AREA

*Salt Slough Unit*

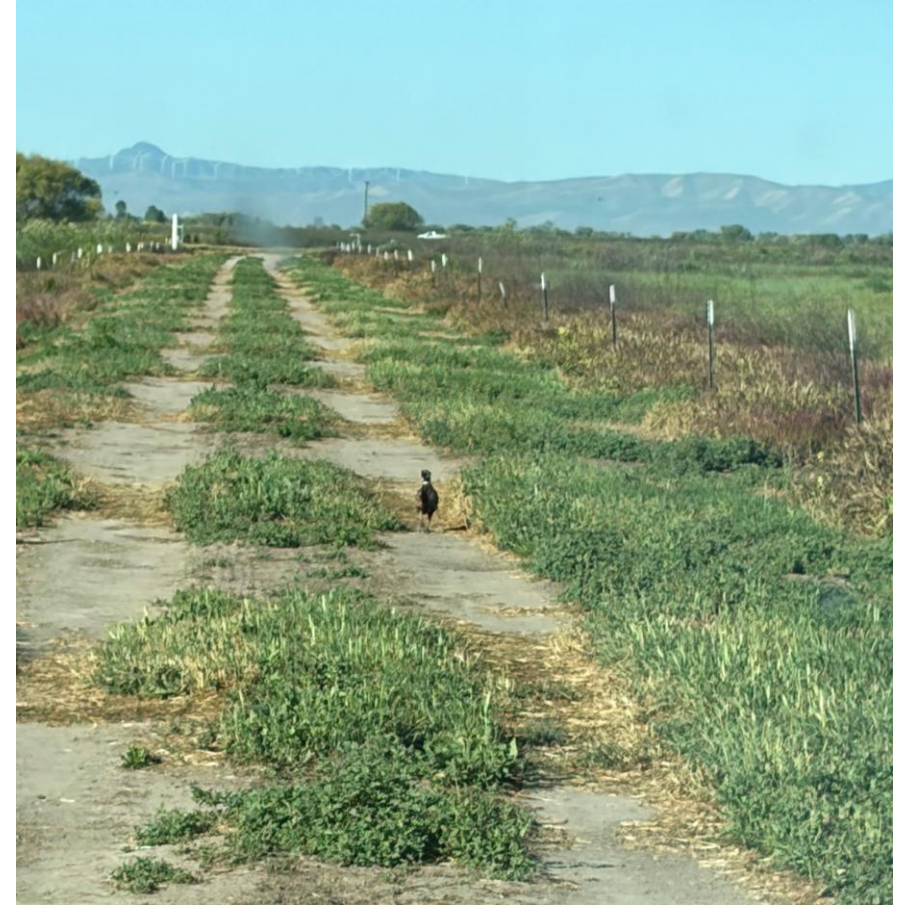
*Gadwall Unit*

*China Island Unit*

## **PRESENTED BY:**

Raymond Cotta – Wildlife Habitat Supervisor I







# Mendota Wildlife Area

- Hyacinth
- Summer Projects
- Pump Repairs
- Summer Water Projections



# Hyacinth at the east side pumps





**Barrier to project the pumps**

# Summer Projects

- Installation of revolving screen at pump 5.
- This project will require a cofferdam on the slough for 6-8 weeks.
- The short-term impact it will cut off water to pumps that lift water on to the east side of the area possibly delay flooding.
- Long term impact of the screen will reduce the amount of aquatic vegetation that impacts the pumps





## Pump projects and repairs

- Last fall, E ditch had to be drawn down and dried out to install infrastructure for a new pump at lot 16. This impacted ability to pump and flood via gravity flows.
- During flood up last fall pump 1 at lot 16 went down with electrical issue and we lost almost 10 complete days of pumping.
- Food for thought pump 1 during fall flood up is running 24/7 and pumps nearly 100 Acre/Ft in a 24-hour period.



# UPCOMING DATES

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- Blind Clean Up Volunteer Opportunities
  - Los Banos and Gadwall/Ramacciotti
  - Date TBD, might be end of May
- Cottonwood Creek, San Luis Reservoir WA Opening Weekend Zone A Deer & Pig Hunt Applications – Available 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May and due July 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Los Banos, North Grasslands WA Special Deer Hunt Applications – Available mid-July and due August 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Los Banos, Volta, Salt Slough RV Applications – Available mid-July and due September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

# THANK YOU

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- 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?



## Participants

Name

RS Rick Schussel - CWA (Unverified)

SA Sean Allen (Unverified)

MR Mike Russell (Unverified)

SW Samuel Wiley

J Jay (Unverified)

MD Mike Dummer  
mdummer@BrwnCald.com

FA Frank Andrade  
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KJ Kenneth Johnson

ED Eric D (Unverified)

Name

GW Gordon W. (Unverified)

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MH Mark. H. (Unverified)

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TG Thomas Gerula

AA A A (Unverified)

Name

MT Mark Perry Tapia (Unverified)

SE Sehra Evans

JM Joseph McFarlane (Unverified)

R Ronnie (Unverified)

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FB Fred Broad

R Ronnie (Unverified)

H hunter (Unverified)

In Person

Gabriel Sandoval

Ron Sandling

Erik Weis

Zachary Smith

Kevin Taylor

Preston Brunk

Luke Matthews

Katheryn Pitkin

Steven Vann

Daniel Vann

Jack Sparks

Brandon Jordan

Landon Azevedo

Tony Quinteros

Mark Ozenbaugh

Lara Sparks

Pritesh Patel

Raymond Cotta

# Online Chat

Rick Schussel - CWA Wednesday 5:13 PM

RS Lara, Very informative charts. Thx

Mark Perry Tapia Wednesday 6:08 PM

MT Push back the bear creek opener dec 1st would be perfect

Sehra Evans Wednesday 6:10 PM

SE What exactly constitutes 100% full?

Jay Wednesday 6:35 PM

J I agree mine never worked also.

Sehra Evans Wednesday 6:36 PM

SE That's fine if they update the app but but will they have clear info on how it will work?

Jay Wednesday 6:37 PM

J I dont have a computer in my trailer.

Sehra Evans Wednesday 6:37 PM

SE I'm sure some of the old guys don't have a computer at all! 😞

Frank Andrade Wednesday 6:47 PM

FA For the blind restoration/upgrade at Los banos, the Grasslands Chapter of Delta Waterfowl has funds to donate to help with that project

Sehra Evans Wednesday 6:49 PM

SE Sorry if this is a silly question but **Do contract diskers get guidance on how much and where to disk to ensure adequate cover?**

Sehra Evans Wednesday 7:12 PM

SE Split season?

Wednesday 8:01 PM

Sehra Evans 3/25/2026 6:49 PM

Sorry if this is a silly question but Do contract diskers get guidance on how much and where to disk to ensure adequate cover?

Yes, the contract diskers are given specific guidance of where and how much to disk.

Unknown User 3/25/2026 6:47 PM

For the blind restoration/upgrade at Los banos, the Grasslands Chapter of Delta Waterfowl has funds to donate to help with that...

Thanks!

Jay Wednesday 8:18 PM

J Yes. Thank you for doing this online also!!!

## In Person Discussion

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- Suggestion to delay opener of W. Bear Creek
  - USFWS will take into consideration
- Question about Snobird
  - USFWS explained the inability to add this due to multiple issues such as staffing, safety/access, lack of secure water
- Discussion regarding mowing of corn at Merced NWR on the Wednesday before the late season goose hunt
  - There will be an offline discussion with USFWS
- Discussion of possibility of splitting the Balance of the State zones to be able to have a later waterfowl opener in the Grasslands
  - Not something this group can change
- Suggestions regarding pheasant hunting on Los Banos WA: possible lottery just for pheasants, having pheasant only hunters wait until 7:45am, only allowing out of Parking lots 11 and 1
  - CDFW will take these into consideration