



California Waterfowl Habitat Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How does the State determine which properties to enroll?

At the close of an open enrollment period, and after the state receives your application and field map, CDFW staff will schedule an initial site visit with you at your club. From information gathered from that initial site visit, CDFW staff will score your property in a competitive ranking process to determine which properties will be enrolled in the program. Since this is a competitive process, not everybody who applies gets enrolled.

2. Am I automatically re-enrolled at the end of my 10-year contract?

No, you are not automatically re-enrolled. When your 10-year contract expires, you are allowed to re-apply, and you will be ranked against all the other properties enrolling at that time.

3. Does the State really require 20-30% of each pond to be disced annually?

Yes. To put it another way, if 20-30% of your pond is disced annually, then within 3-5 years, the entire pond bottom is disced (which is important for moist-soil plants).

4. Why is discing so important?

Discing is a very important tool for moist-soil management. Discing is required for several reasons:

1. To control rank growth (cattails, wiregrass, etc) and certain noxious weeds.
2. To set back wetland succession. This will change plant types from low seed-producing perennial plants to high seed-producing annuals (moist-soil plants), such as swamp timothy, watergrass, and smartweed.
3. To rejuvenate moist-soil plants. Moist-soil plants will usually begin to produce less seed as you approach 3-5 years post-discing.
4. To aerate the soil. This helps promote root growth and also “plants” some of the seeds that naturally occur in the soil.
5. Finally, to improve soil conditions and promote plant growth in an otherwise bare spot. Discing along with irrigations will help with leaching some salts from the soil out of the barren areas and will improve plant growth.

Discing is usually recommended to remedy two or more of these situations at the same time.

5. Am I required to disc near my hunting blinds?

No. You are not required to disc adjacent to your blinds. We will work cooperatively with you as to where the discing should be focused.

6. Am I allowed to plant food plots or crops (i.e. corn, rice, milo, sudan, etc.)?

The Presley Program strives to develop wetland management strategies that promote moist-soil plants (i.e., watergrass, smartweed, and swamp timothy) to benefit waterfowl. **The policy of the Presley Program is to not compensate enrolled landowners for planting food plots.**



This policy is based on the premise that moist-soil plants are more cost-efficient to grow than food plots, provide total energy values similar to food plots, have higher nutritive qualities than food plots, and provide greater vegetative diversity than a monoculture of one crop. Food plots require annual tillage, purchase of seed, fertilizer applications, herbicide applications, and multiple well-timed irrigations to be productive. Moist-soil plants require one-third as much fuel per unit to grow, no fertilizer, and a fraction of the water. It is our position that the technical assistance and limited funding provided by the CWHP are better utilized to manage moist-soil habitats than food plots.

7. What if I don't have enough water to irrigate or maintain my wetland on a regular basis?

CDFW staff will work with you to explain and identify the water requirements needed for spring irrigation, summer flooding of brood ponds, and winter flooding of seasonal wetlands. We understand that periodic drought may affect water supplies necessary for wetland management. However, the program may not be a good fit for your property if under normal rainfall conditions there is not enough water to regularly conduct spring irrigation, maintain brood ponds, and winter-flood seasonal wetlands.

8. What happens if I cannot accomplish what is required during the summer field season?

This is something that we try to avoid if at all possible. If you accomplished portions of what was required, you may be paid a portion of your incentive payment; however, if you cannot accomplish any of the requirements stated in the Annual Work Plan, you will not receive any part of your incentive payment. If you find yourself in either one of these situations, it is highly recommended that you stay in close communication with CDFW staff to avoid any breach of contract.

If the reasons why your requirements were not accomplished are temporary, then we will work with you to keep your contract active and you will simply not receive your payment for that year. Conversely, if the reasons for not managing the property are of a more permanent nature, then your contract will be canceled and the State will place its money elsewhere to maintain high-quality wetland habitat.

9. Are there any penalties or fees for canceling my contract?

No, there are no cancellation fees or penalties for opting out of your contract before the 10-year period is over. This is a voluntary program and there is always a waitlist with landowners ready to sign up if you no longer wish to participate. However, if there is a breach in the contract as determined by the State, you may be subject to the "Pay-back" clause.

10. What is the "Pay-back" clause?

The full details of the "Pay-back" clause will be described in its entirety in your contract; however a short summation is as follows:

If the State determines that you have breached your contract and that the breach involves injury to waterfowl habitat on the agreement lands from any use or activity inconsistent with the purpose of the agreement, the State shall give written notice to you of such breach and demand corrective action. If you fail to cure the breach or make a reasonable effort within 30 days after receipt of notice to cure the breach, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife may require you to refund to the State all payments received under the agreement plus interest at the legal rate.

11. Tell me more about the Management Plans and Annual Work Plans.

These plans are tailored to allow for adaptive habitat management as wetland conditions change or new resource information becomes available.



The "Framework" or Site-Specific Management Plan

Upon enrollment of each property, CDFW staff writes a geographically generic management plan. These "framework" management plans typically require landowners to implement moist-soil management practices such as timely spring drawdowns, spring and summer irrigations, and pond-bottom discing as needed. However, CDFW also integrates summer brood habitat, upland nesting habitat, and riparian habitat into plans as appropriate. Water depth and water conveyance system improvements are also addressed.

The framework plans provide immediate and long-term wetland management objectives for the property by specifying both the current acreage requirement for each habitat type and the level of intensity of habitat management that the State can ultimately require. Within the limits specified in the plan, the State, in any given year, can establish enforceable requirements for levels of discing, proper irrigation, and area of brood habitat as is deemed necessary to create an ideal mix of habitats. Thus, management objectives may vary from year to year.

The framework plan works for two main reasons:

1. First, the upper limits of habitat management established in the framework plan assures landowners that State requirements will not exceed a certain level of intensity. This is important to landowners for a variety of reasons, ranging from economics to hunter satisfaction.
2. Secondly, it allows the State to adapt to changing wetland habitat conditions by incorporating the Annual Work Plan.

Annual Work Plans

CDFW staff assess wetland conditions each spring and prescribe specific habitat management actions (e.g. discing, summer irrigations, water distribution system improvements) within the framework established in the management plan. The annual spring meeting and subsequent Annual Work Plan provide a means for the State and the landowner to deal with unforeseen wetland management problems and to reach agreement on what management practices need to be carried out that year. Upon receiving the Annual Work Plan, the landowner is responsible for proper implementation of all required items. CDFW biologists provide technical assistance during the spring and summer, as requested by the landowner.

For example, discing can be required as it becomes necessary to rejuvenate moist-soil plant communities. This is much different than "suggesting" or "recommending" that a landowner disc a portion of a wetland unit. The State works with landowners to address their concerns (i.e. discing too close to blinds), but the work requirements, once adopted, are not optional. Failure to implement required items will result in the withholding of all or a portion of the incentive payment.

12. When is enrollment going to be back open?

Open enrollments occur at the end of a ten-year contract cycle, when new funding becomes available, and as properties are no longer interested in participating in the program (which does happen, but rarely).

13. Why do some people wish to no longer participate?

There may be several reasons why certain landowners no longer wish to participate. Although canceling a contract is rare, it does occur from time to time. Some of the reasons for canceling a contract may be a change in wetland management philosophies, a change in finances, or a change in the amount of time one has to devote to active wetland habitat management.