



July 26, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 219  
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins  
President Pro-Tem  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: Immediate Funding for the Protection of the Pacific Flyway**

We, the undersigned organizations, write to stress the urgency for funding for winter flooding of ricelands to support the millions of migratory birds that are so dependent upon Pacific Flyway habitat.

Without winter flooding, the Flyway will be seriously impacted. Never before have we seen winter water deliveries curtailed to such extreme levels. Without immediate action, we estimate that winter-flooded ricelands available for these migrating birds will be less than 25 percent of normal. In our state, where over 90 percent of the original wetlands are gone, these species have become dependent upon these winter-flooded 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. Having these species find nothing but dry fields when they arrive here next fall would be devastating. There is also a need to better understand how this year's drought and droughts like this are affecting wetland dependent migratory birds and how effective incentive programs are at mitigating those impacts.

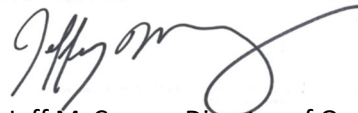
We encourage you to consider an allocation of \$10 million from the funding approved in AB 129 for winter flooding as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than September 1. Rice farmers are currently making their plans for how they will manage their rice straw in absence of surface water. Most will implement additional tillage operations, in lieu of winter-flooding, because the use of groundwater for this purpose is far too cost-prohibitive for them. If no cost-share assistance is available by September 1, it will be very challenging to deploy these environmental assistance funds prior to growers conducting their tillage operations after rice harvest. In addition, we encourage you to also consider an allocation of \$2 million to support the science needed to monitor and measure the impacts of drought that can guide future habitat programs and ensure cost-effective investments.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to working with you and your staff.

Sincerely,



Michael Lynes, Director of Public Policy  
Audubon California



Jeff McCreary, Director of Operations, Western  
Region  
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.



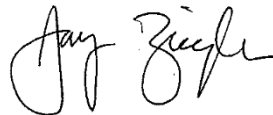
Timothy A. Johnson, President/CEO  
California Rice Commission



Gary Link, Legislative Affairs Director  
Northern California Water Association



John Carlson, President  
California Waterfowl



Jay Ziegler, Director of Policy and External  
Affairs for California  
The Nature Conservancy

Cc: The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair, Senate Budget Committee  
The Honorable Vince Fong, Vice Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
The Honorable Jim Nielsen, Vice Chair, Senate Budget Committee  
The Honorable Richard Bloom, Chair, Assembly Budget Sub-Committee 3  
The Honorable Bob Wieckowski, Chair, Senate Budget Sub-Committee 2