

WATERFOWL NEED HELP FROM RICE FARMERS

Rice farmers, waterfowlers, and waterfowl have always had a symbiotic relationship, particularly in California, where post-harvest flooding of rice fields provides important winter habitat and food for waterfowl, a place to hunt, and an effective way to decompose straw and prepare fields for the next planting season. But with drought conditions of historic proportions currently affecting the entire state, waterfowl need the help of rice farmers more than ever.

Water availability for wetlands and harvested rice fields is extremely limited. Conditions in critical fall staging areas such as the Klamath Basin are dire and waterfowl will find few places to stop and recharge on their journey to wintering grounds in the Sacramento Valley. We need to maximize habitat availability with limited water this fall and be ready to capture rainfall this winter to provide additional habitat when waterfowl populations peak.

Ducks Unlimited and the **California Waterfowl Association** have been working hard to secure winter water and financial relief for landowners able to pump groundwater to flood rice fields and habitat. Drought creates difficulties for farmers, hunters, and waterfowl. We are hopeful that you, as stewards of the land, can help.

-Please put your boards in even if you do not have decomp water.

-Please treat your fields as you would normally if you were going to receive decomp water.



HOW CAN RICE FARMERS HELP?

- Decomposition water makes food more accessible to many waterfowl species, but due to the drought the amount of decomp water available will be much lower than normal. However, even if fields cannot be flooded post harvest, the waste grain that is left will be accessible to some ducks and geese and will become more accessible if water pools in the fields through rainfall. **Please put your boards in even if you do not have decomp water.** Advanced food modeling shows that demand is expected to exceed supply in mid-winter for waterfowl. If significant rains come, it could make the waste grain accessible at the time when the birds will really need it.
- We understand that some level of mechanical post-harvest treatment is necessary to facilitate the breakdown of rice straw and prepare the fields for planting the following spring. **Please treat your fields as you would normally if you were going to receive decomp water.** Any further incorporation will reduce the available food by burying it and making it inaccessible to waterfowl.

Ducks Unlimited and **California Waterfowl Association** understand the stresses this drought is placing on farmers and appreciate your continued partnership and cooperation. By working together we can maximize the benefits of the limited water that is available so both farmers and waterfowl can continue to thrive in this great valley. Thank you.

