

RICE FARMERS AND WATERFOWL WORKING TOGETHER

Rice farmers, waterfowlers and waterfowl have always had a symbiotic relationship, particularly in California, where flooded rice fields offer important winter habitat and food for waterfowl, a place to hunt for leasees and a great way to prepare fields for the next planting season. But with drought conditions of historic proportions currently affecting the entire state, all of us need to help each other more than ever.

Simply put, the birds need all the food they can get in harvested fields. The breeding duck survey in the Pacific Flyway this past spring reported the largest numbers since surveys began in 1955. Therefore, the fall flight of birds that will need to find critical wintering habitat in the Sacramento Valley is expected to be very high.

Ducks Unlimited and the **California Waterfowl Association** have been working hard to help agencies understand the importance of winter flooded rice fields and to secure winter water. These times of drought are a stress to us all and we understand the difficulties the lack of water presents to 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 we understand that due to the drought the amount of decomp water available is expected to be much lower than normal. We're working to try to increase those amounts. However, even if fields cannot be flooded, the waste grain that is left post harvest will be accessible to some ducks and geese and can 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 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 extensive mechanical treatment will reduce the available food by burying it and making it inaccessible to waterfowl.

The **California Waterfowl Association** and **Ducks Unlimited** understand the issues this drought is placing on the entire state, especially farmers, and are so grateful for your cooperation. By working jointly we believe we can maximize the benefits of the limited available water resources so that both farmers and waterfowl can not only continue to co-exist, but thrive. Thank you.

