



May 19, 2016

This is an exciting day! Today, the California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation opens its doors for anyone to join in this exciting step towards preserving the Pacific Flyway for future generations. The stark reality is that the future of waterbird habitat in the Central Valley—a central hub of the Pacific Flyway—is critically linked to rice. Without it the Flyway would likely crash. In crunching the numbers, wetland biologists find they just can't meet bird population objectives without the 500,000 acres of rice that provide 60 percent of the food for wintering waterfowl and make up nearly 90 percent of flooded habitat in the Sacramento Valley.

California's winter-flooded rice fields are providing habitat equivalent to about 225,000 acres of wetlands. It would cost about \$2 billion, and probably much more, to replace this critical habitat through wetland restoration and would only be possible if the water for such a massive restoration effort was even available. Pretty unlikely in water-stressed California! The key is keeping California rice growers viable and maximizing the waterbird benefits provided by virtually every acre of rice.

This unique Foundation—a true partnership between rice growers and waterbird conservation groups—can pave the way for sustained conservation benefits to waterbirds. However, the most important partner is you!

Thanks to previous investments by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and other organizations, the Foundation has a proven model to put meaningful conservation investments on the ground. Many of these beneficial waterbird practices reduce the farmer's bottom line. The Foundation will efficiently invest dollars to get the habitat we want at exactly when it's most needed. How efficiently? Well, these annual management practices could be funded for hundreds of years and still be less expensive than buying and managing these lands as habitat.

Our success will depend on anyone who wants to be a part of this legacy. This will take a sustained and passionate effort—from the largest foundations and corporate donors all the way to each of us who want to be a part of this great adventure.

Let's do this! Visit CalRiceWaterbirds.org or call us at (916) 387-2264 to learn more.

Sincerely,

Paul Buttner, Chairman
California Ricelands Waterbird Foundation