



BARBARA MITERS



STATE CONSERVATION REPORT

CONSERVATION UPDATE

California is currently in the midst of a historic drought that is threatening to change the landscape of the state's remaining wetlands. Only a little more than five percent of the Golden State's historic marshes and 10 percent of its riparian corridors remain today, a mere fraction of their original four to five million acres size. With the future of the state's water in such critical flux, these numbers have the potential to get worse over time without action. Ducks Unlimited considers the Central Valley and San Francisco Bay wetlands to be one of five highest-priority habitats in North America and is spearheading California's wetland conservation efforts. Every opportunity to protect, restore or rehabilitate the state's shrinking

wetlands habitat is being fully explored and carefully considered. While DU has many conservation projects throughout the state, some are particularly noteworthy: Sear's Point in San Francisco Bay, Tule Lake and the Klamath Basin in northern California, Twitchell Island and Cougar Wetlands in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the Grasslands Ecological Area in Central California, and Piute Ponds in Southern California. Whether the projects are enhancement or restoration, subsidence reversal or groundwork for wildlife-friendly agriculture, all share a common spotlight for being some of DU's finest and most groundbreaking conservation efforts.

COLUSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are currently in the midst of a major project that will restore or enhance about 739 acres of habitat at Colusa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), which consists of about 5,077 acres and is located in California's

Sacramento Valley. The refuge provides vitally important habitat for Pacific Flyway waterfowl and supports more than 234,000 ducks and 133,000 geese during the winter—among the highest by any of the Sacramento Valley's public wetland areas.

During 2013 and 2014, DU and USFWS completed the first two phases of work of the project, restoring lands to a mix of seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands and native uplands, with the final phase of restoration scheduled to take place during summer 2015. ▶



One of the areas, Tract 19, previously consisted of nearly 71 acres of wetlands divided into three small narrow units. To produce a large high-quality wetland habitat, the levees were removed, the area was recontoured and the small units were incorporated into Tract 27, which will be managed to provide important habitat for numerous waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and a diversity of other wildlife, including several wetland-

dependent special-status species. The restored lands will also provide new public hunting opportunities.

Pools 1, 2, and 4 are part of Colusa NWR's very popular spaced pond public hunting area and previously did not have proper water distribution and limited water and vegetation management capabilities. During 2013 and 2014, DU improved these units by recontouring

selected areas, constructing swales and potholes, removing and constructing interior and exterior levees, constructing new water delivery canals, and installing water control structures. The work improved water distribution and water use efficiency, increased the quality of wetland habitat for waterfowl and a diversity of other species, and improved public hunting opportunities in the area.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE HELP DU PRESERVE CALIFORNIA'S ENDANGERED WETLANDS

Ducks Unlimited needs your help. The best way to promote healthy waterfowl populations is by volunteering with your local DU committee. Funds raised through local events are the foundation of the organization's conservation efforts. There are three areas of particular concern under the California Wetlands Initiative: San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Valley, and the Lower Klamath Basin. While each area offers a unique set of needs and challenges, water management issues are among the highest concerns across the board. With your gift to the California Wetlands Initiative, Ducks Unlimited will continue to work with partners and landowners to address water shortages and management concerns from a waterfowl perspective. DU will also remain focused on restoration in the high-priority Central Valley, where 95 percent of historic wetlands critical to millions of wintering waterfowl have been lost and continue to disappear each year. Ducks Unlimited is seeking charitable contributions of 6.3 million to achieve our conservation goals in California. A gift to DU's California Wetlands Initiative will support projects close to home, but also will ensure that the remaining undisturbed wetlands in Canada's boreal forest will be protected before restoration is required.

For more information on DU's California Wetlands Initiative:

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