



## STATE CONSERVATION REPORT

### CONSERVATION UPDATE

With the west suffering through a fourth successive year of drought, many key sites in Nevada had limited water in the spring, such as the Lahontan and Carson Valleys, and are now either dry or on the brink due to a very low snowpack in the Carson River watershed and lack of water in the Lahontan Reservoir, which supplies water to Stillwater NWR, Carson Lake and Pasture, and privately managed wetlands. Ruby Lake NWR is also drier than normal, although the springs that supply much of its water are still providing critical wetland habitat.

For the two million plus waterfowl that migrate from the Canadian prairie breeding grounds to the Great Salt Lake, through western Nevada and onto Central Valley wintering grounds, it appears it will be a long fall flight without much water in western Nevada this year. That can change, however, with any luck if the region receives fall rain and winter snow to provide spring migration habitat in 2016 for the

many mallard, pintail, green-winged teal, canvasback, redhead, ruddy ducks, and tundra swans which migrate through the region.

In the eastern portion of the state, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) owns and manages regionally important wetlands in a string of wildlife management areas (WMAs) that span the area from Ely on the north (Steptoe Valley WMA) to Moapa Valley on the south (Overton WMA), with Kirch and Key Pittman WMAs and the federally-owned Pahrangat NWR located in between. These wetlands support tens of thousands of waterfowl on migration and/or during their winter. Nevada's wetlands truly are the proverbial oases in the desert. Though few and far between, because of their rarity in the dry Great Basin environment, these wetland habitats are of greater value to waterfowl than many marshes in less arid areas.

Recent and on-going Ducks Unlimited projects include work

with NDOW at Key-Pittman and Overton WMAs, with NDOW and Bureau of Reclamation at Carson Lake and Pasture, and with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at Stillwater NWR. New work in the engineering design stage includes work at Carson Lake and Pasture and Mason Valley WMA with NDOW, at the Incline Village Wetlands Enhancement Facility with Incline Village General Improvement District, at the Fallon Tribal Wetlands with the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, at Buzzy's Ranch with Carson City Department of Parks and Recreation, and at other sites.

As always, collaborative partnerships are crucial for success and DU continues to work closely with the National Wildlife Refuge System, NDOW, and other organizations to identify wetland conservation opportunities. With new projects in the planning stages, DU is actively seeking both public and private funding to support these efforts.



## CARSON LAKE AND PASTURE

As part of DU's March 2014 North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant award for wetland conservation work for the Lahontan Valley – Western Nevada region, DU completed a water conveyance improvement project at Carson Lake and Pasture (CL&P) in fall 2014. This project improved portions of the three-mile long Rice Drain which will improve NDOW's ability to deliver habitat management water to over 2,700 acres of wetlands in the Rice, Big Water, and York units. The work included installing two new water control structures (WCS), constructing an in-line canal weir, rebuilding several thousand feet of ditch bank, improving the ditch flow line, and removing vegetation that impeded water flow.

A companion project is now in the works at CL&P to enhance wetlands in the Sprig Pond Unit by improving the Cabin Drain which delivers water to Sprig Pond. This entails cleaning the drain for the first time in over 30 years and installing a new WCS that will improve water delivery to portions of the unit. Project partners for this work include NDOW, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, DU-Nevada, Greenhead Club, and Bureau of Reclamation. Project construction is anticipated for fall 2015.

In light of the current drought and very limited wetland water supply, projects such as this are critical to helping improve NDOW's ability to deliver its available water and improve habitat that is vital to spring migrating waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway, as well as those which use CL&P's wetlands for breeding and molting, along with returning fall migrants. Key waterfowl species that will benefit include Wrangel Island snow geese, northern pintail, mallard, redhead, cinnamon and green-winged teal, and northern shoveler.



## TAKE THE INITIATIVE

### HELP DU PRESERVE CALIFORNIA'S ENDANGERED WETLANDS

DU's main areas of concern in Nevada involve wetland complexes in Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge in the east and the Stillwater/Carson Sink and Lahontan Valley in the northwest. These rare wetlands serve as breeding, migration, staging and wintering grounds for many waterfowl, making them important resources for recreationists and the local economy.

Ducks Unlimited is seeking charitable contributions from generous people like you to achieve our conservation goals as part of the new Ducks in the Desert Initiative. Your charitable support will enable Ducks Unlimited to conduct important science, public policy and outreach efforts, as well as conserve the breeding habitats important to waterfowl that utilize Great Basin wetlands each year.

A gift to DU's Ducks in the Desert Initiative will support projects close to home, but also will ensure that the remaining undisturbed breeding grounds on both sides of the border will be protected before restoration is required.

**For more information on DU's Ducks in the Desert Initiative:**

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