

Landscape Conservation in the Central Valley of California

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The issues facing waterfowl in California's Central Valley are complex and multi-disciplinary. Knowledge in a variety of fields, ranging from waterfowl and wetland ecology, to agricultural economics and water law, are needed to provide a balanced and careful vision for the future of California waterfowl. In 1989, the Central Valley Joint Venture established habitat objectives for the region, and identified the biological basis for those objectives. We built on these earlier accomplishments to further refine landscape conservation strategies for the Central Valley. In doing so we tested the biological assumptions on which habitat objectives were based, and used results of these tests to update habitat objectives for the Central Valley as a whole, as well as for each of the region's nine drainage basins. Biologically sound habitat objectives alone, however, are not enough to ensure that the Central Valley will continue to sustain traditional numbers of waterfowl. Urbanization, conversion of agricultural land, water shortages, endangered species conflicts, and events outside the Central Valley all present challenges to meeting these objectives. Moreover, these challenges are not uniform throughout the Central Valley and conservation strategies must reflect these spatial differences. Here, we outline an approach to landscape conservation in the Central Valley that addresses the needs of waterfowl in the face of biological and non-biological constraints.