



December 6, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Ducks Unlimited (DU) is supportive of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act. On behalf of our more than one million members and supporters nationwide, DU has worked closely with Senator Feinstein over the past two years to ensure that water and water rights critical to California's wildlife refuges were not diminished in California Drought Legislation. We believe the drought provisions now included in the WIIN Act safeguard existing water rights and take important steps toward improving the distribution of water to wildlife refuges in the Central Valley.

Water supply development takes a great toll on wetlands and any new water supply legislation must not further exacerbate this trend. The Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) was a critical step toward mitigating the environmental damage caused by decades of large-scale water development in California. A sustainable water future requires diligent preservation of that mitigation program, plus new innovations in water supply resilience.

Specifically, the bill protects water supplies for Central Valley Project (CVP) wildlife refuges by including refuge contractors in its water right provisions, and by expressly protecting the Department of Interior's obligations under the CVPIA. It authorizes an additional \$10 million in funding over five years to improve refuge water conveyance infrastructure. Implementation of this bill would likely increase the reliability of refuge water supplies delivered by the Department of Interior through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It also authorizes funding for water storage projects that provide federal benefits, including wildlife refuge benefits.

California annually hosts one of the greatest concentrations of migratory waterfowl in North America, serving as the wintering home to millions of waterfowl, shorebirds and other wetland-dependent species. The majority of migratory birds that frequent Alaska, Washington and Oregon spend their winters in California, especially on winter-flooded rice fields. Rice agriculture in California plays a crucial role in fulfilling the annual life cycle needs of numerous Pacific Flyway birds. These migratory visitors provide countless hours of enjoyment to hunters and birdwatchers throughout the Pacific Flyway. As a result, migratory waterfowl are also an important economic driver across the region, especially in California. Sportsmen, including waterfowlers, contribute \$3.5 billion annually to California's economy. The birds of

the Pacific Flyway are a shared resource, requiring the stewardship of not only California, but of all Western states, as well as Canada and Mexico, as they migrate thousands of miles between their breeding grounds and winter homes.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding our assessment of the California Drought provisions in the WIIN Act and their importance to California's wildlife refuges and the millions of birds in the Pacific Flyway that visit these wetland habitats each year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Dale Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "H".

H. Dale Hall
Chief Executive Officer
Ducks Unlimited