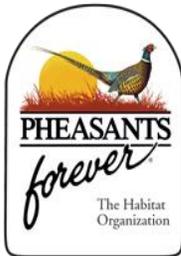




California Rice



**NCWA**  
Northern California Water Association



*Lower Sherman Island Duck Hunters Association*



March 24, 2017

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia, Chair  
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee  
1020 N Street, Suite 160  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 472 (Frazier) – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Garcia:

Our organizations, which represent hundreds of thousands of wildlife conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts in California, urge you to support AB 472 (Frazier), which would facilitate the establishment of waterfowl nesting and other wildlife habitat cover on fallowed lands, including those involved with water transfers.

AB 472 would help fulfill an important need of providing additional nesting cover and upland habitat for waterfowl, other game birds and songbirds. This would particularly benefit breeding birds in the rice growing areas of the Sacramento Valley that periodically participate in water transfers and offer beneficial brood water for ducks in the spring and summer.

Studies have shown that providing nesting cover through the breeding season can greatly benefit waterfowl. For example, the results of the 2013 Rice Cover Crop Rotation Pilot Project, which was part of the Department of Fish and Wildlife's (DFW) Ecosystem Restoration Program, found that annual cover crops located adjacent to rice cultivation produced on average 39% nest success (which is well above the 15% that is typically targeted by waterfowl biologists).

AB 472 would increase available nesting cover in two ways. First, it would strengthen a policy established in 2013 in the Water Code that requires the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to encourage non-irrigated cover crops and other natural vegetation on fallowed lands involved with water transfers, so long as the water transfer requirements are met. Many landowners still fear that they will be penalized by DWR if they do not remove or kill (e.g. disc or spray herbicides) the non-irrigated vegetative cover on these lands. The bill would help ensure that any requirement by DWR to remove or manipulate that cover is based on credible scientific data and it is accomplished in a way that reduces impacts to waterfowl and other wildlife.

Second, AB 472 would create an incentive-based program for landowners who are willing to maintain wildlife cover on fallowed lands, including, but not limited to, lands involved with a water transfer. Voluntary, incentive based wildlife cover programs such as the federal Conservation Reserve Program have helped to significantly increase waterfowl populations in the Prairie Pothole region of the upper Midwest. Creating a similar program here in California should provide similar waterfowl and other wildlife conservation benefits, and the next federal Farm Bill offers opportunities to provide federal funding for this purpose.

Please also note that providing upland cover on fallowed lands improves air quality and helps to sequester carbon, amongst other environmental benefits.

For these reasons, please support AB 472 when it is considered by your committee.

Sincerely,



Mark Hennelly, California Waterfowl Association



Paul Buttner, California Rice Commission



John Devney, Delta Waterfowl



Ric Ortega, Grassland Water District



Don Kirby, Cal-Ore Wetlands and Waterfowl Council



Dennis Slater, Tulare Basin Wetlands Association



Kyriakos Tsakopoulos, Conaway Preservation Group



Todd Manley, Northern California Water Association



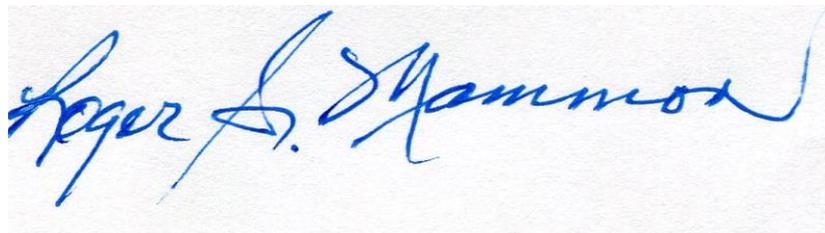
Rachael Zwillinger, Defenders of Wildlife



Dan Connelly, Pheasants Forever, Inc./Quail Forever



Steve Chappell, Suisun Resource Conservation District



Roger Mammon, Lower Sherman Island Duck Hunters Association



Maddy Folk, The Black Brant Group



Gary Link, Ducks Unlimited



Jay Ziegler, The Nature Conservancy