



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge  
1624 Hood-Franklin Road  
Elk Grove, CA 95757  
Phone: 916-775-4421 Fax: 916-775-4407  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/stone-lakes/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/stone-lakes/)

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is offering a Cooperative Agricultural Opportunity for grazing on the Refuge. The grazing program is intended to modify vegetation structure for the benefit of wildlife, primarily the creation and maintenance of short grass foraging habitat for wintering migratory birds and nesting habitat for resident birds and other wildlife. Grazing will also be used to reduce the prevalence of non-native plant species.

If selected, the successful applicant will be issued a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the 2022/2023 grazing season, with the option of extending for an additional four years.

Instructions for applying:

- Review the Cooperative Agricultural Opportunity (page 2).
- Complete and sign the Application for Cooperative Agriculture Opportunity (page 13).
- Review the Special Conditions and sign to acknowledge acceptance (page 18).
- Complete numbers 1b-11b, 21 and sign and date on line 31 of the Special Use Permit.

Applicants may schedule a tour of the Refuge by contacting management at the number below. In order to be considered, all materials must be completed and signed by Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, and submitted via email or mail to:

Stone Lakes NWR  
Attn: Grazing Program  
1624 Hood-Franklin Road  
Elk Grove, CA 95757  
Office: (916) 775-4421 ext. 151  
[beatrice\\_treiterer@fws.gov](mailto:beatrice_treiterer@fws.gov)

### **Cooperative Agricultural Opportunity**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is soliciting proposals from qualified individuals to enter into a Cooperative Agricultural Agreement (CAA) with Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Elk Grove, California. The purpose of the CAA is to use cattle grazing to support the Service's conservation and resource management objectives. The Service has determined that cooperative agriculture is an appropriate, compatible, and necessary use of the Refuge to meet these objectives.

The Refuge proposes to use cattle grazing as tools to modify vegetation structure, density, and composition on the North Stone Lake Unit, Gallagher Unit, and Sun River Unit for the benefit of grassland dependent migratory and resident birds and federally endangered plant and vertebrate species including sandhill cranes, arctic nesting geese (snow geese, greater white-fronted goose), Aleutian cackling geese, long billed curlew, and shorebirds, and migratory and breeding grassland dependent birds including western meadowlark, burrowing owls, and sparrow species. Grazing will also be used to reduce the prevalence of non-native plant species. Refuge management and the cooperator will work closely to assess grassland conditions and achieve vegetation targets (vegetation height and pounds per acre of biomass) that are assessed throughout the year and measured annually in grazed management units. Not all areas of the Refuge may be available for grazing each year.

Grassland conditions and achievement of vegetation management targets may result in a unit being taken out of the grazing rotation for a period specified by the Refuge Manager. Grassland conditions are managed for wildlife and not for production purposes. Due to drought conditions and the increasing populations of arctic nesting geese (+55,000) that feed in the pasture units from December through April, stocking rates have decreased over time (Table 1).

The selected applicant will operate under a CAA as a "cooperator" with the Service. In this capacity, the cooperator will work closely with Refuge management to achieve vegetation target conditions intended to benefit native plants and wildlife, especially wintering migratory birds.

Applicants will possess the professional knowledge, aptitude, and resources to manage annual/perennial grasslands for the benefit of wildlife species. The cooperator is required to own all cattle grazing on the Refuge. No subleasing is allowed. The cooperator will have use of up to approximately 2,290 acres of grasslands on the Refuge for the 2022/23 season, with the option to extend for an additional four years.

Table 1. Approximate acreage and grazing period for grazing units on the Stone Lakes NWR.

Unit	Acreage (approx.)	Management Action	Range of AUM rates	Time Period
North Stone Lake Unit Dry Pasture	1,875	Grazing	130-200	Nov 1, 2022 – April/May 2023 *
North Stone Lake Unit Irrigated Pasture/Wet Meadow	168	Grazing	120-165	May/June 2023 - Oct 31, 2023*
Sun River Unit Irrigated/Wet Meadow	125	Grazing	90-110	May/June 2023 - Oct 31, 2023*
Gallagher Unit North Dry Pasture	85	Grazing	35-45	Nov 1, 2022 – Apr/May 2023*
Gallagher Unit South Irrigated Pasture/Wet Meadow	37	Grazing	30-40	May/June 2023 - Oct 31, 2023*

\*End date varies from year to year depending on forage availability and restoration projects

Period of Performance

The period of performance for the CAA will be one year with the ability to extend to a total of five years, from November 1, 2022, through October 31, 2027, or until either party provides at least 30 days’ notice of intent to terminate the CAA. The period of performance cannot be extended beyond the 5-year period. Upon the conclusion of the 5-year period of performance, the Refuge will publish a new notice of cooperative agricultural opportunity and again issue a CAA using a competitive process based upon objective criteria.

Lease Pricing

The initial rate that will be included within the CAA will be \$30.00/AUM, with an AUM being defined as Animal Unit Equivalent (AUE) grazing for one month. For the purposes of the CAA, one Animal Unit (AU) will be defined as one mature cow, two years old and above, dry, or including a nursing calf less than 6 months of age (See Table 2).

Table 2: Proposed 2022 animal and class categories and associated animal unit equivalent (AUE) values.

Animal and Class	Animal Unit Equivalent (AUE)
Cow	1.00
Cow/Calf Pair	1.00
Bull	1.50
Yearling	0.80
Weaned Calf	0.60

Modified from Grazing Handbook - A Guide for Resource Managers in Coastal California (<http://www.carangeland.org/images/GrazingHandbook.pdf>)

Improvements

Improvements to the properties will be done in lieu of payment and may include any of the following: weed control, infrastructure repair such as fence construction and repair, irrigation system and pump maintenance and repair, biological surveys, native grass, riparian and wetland restoration. As part of the grazing program, the cooperators will be responsible for maintenance and/or upgrades of all grazing infrastructure. Maintenance related expenses such as equipment, supplies, and labor will be deducted from annual grazing fees per Service guidelines. Habitat management, restoration, and associated supplies and labor will also be deducted from annual grazing fees. **The goal is to offset 100% of the grazing fees with maintenance and improvement of infrastructure and habitat improvement/restoration.** The grazing cooperator may also propose maintenance or infrastructure projects on the Refuge, and following the approval of Refuge management, the cost of such projects will be deducted from annual grazing fees.

Improvements and costs will be approved by the Refuge Manager prior to initiation of projects.

Annual Grazing Period

Grazing will occur annually as described in Table 1. The dry pasture grazing period will begin November 1<sup>st</sup> and typically extends to April/May, but no later than May 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year. The irrigated/wet meadow grazing period coincides with the end of the dry pasture grazing period, typically April/May and ends October 31<sup>st</sup>. The length of the grazing period may be adjusted (increased or decreased) by the Refuge Manager and is highly dependent upon rainfall, flooding and/or drought conditions, forage availability, vegetation target conditions, infrastructure needs, native grass restoration, weed control efforts, and/or other unforeseen circumstances. The intent of the CAA is to establish a flexible multi-year agreement between the cooperator and the Refuge that meets the management objectives of the Refuge.

Annual Billing Period

Annual billing and reconciliation of cost-sharing incentives will be administered in the months of November/December following the end of irrigated pasture/wet meadow grazing season.

Liability Insurance Requirements

The cooperator and any subcontractors will be required to maintain insurance policies covering all activities on the Refuge. Cooperator will be required to have coverage under Farm Liability under a Commercial General Liability plan with the minimum of the following limits:

Each Occurrence	\$1,000,000
Damage to Rented Premises	\$ 100,000
Medical Expenses (Any one person)	\$ 5,000
Personal and Advanced Injury	\$1,000,000
General Aggregate	\$2,000,000
Products – Comp/Operation Aggregate	\$2,000,000

The cooperator will be required to comply with applicable Federal and State workers' compensation and occupational disease statutes. If occupational diseases are not compensable under those statutes, they shall be covered under the employer's liability section of the insurance policy, except when contract operations are so commingled with a contractor's commercial

operations that it would not be practical to require this coverage. Employer’s liability coverage as shown in the table shall be required, except in States with exclusive or monopolistic funds that do not permit workers’ compensation to be written by private carriers.

The cooperator shall have coverage for bodily injury and property damage liability covering the operation of all automobiles used in connection with performing the contract. The amount of liability coverage on other policies shall be commensurate with any legal requirements of the locality and sufficient to meet normal and customary claims.

Selection Process

The cooperator will be selected through an open, transparent, and competitive process, where applications will be scored and ranked based upon objective criteria in Table 3 and written responses to application questions (See attached Application). The Refuge will notify all applicants individually within 45 days after the closing of the opportunity notice.

Table 3. Selection criteria used to rank and select grazing cooperator at Stone Lakes NWR.

Ranking Criteria	Scoring Criteria – based on years of experience			
	0	1	2	3
Scoring				
Experience managing livestock grazing operations in Northern California grasslands	None	< 5 years	5 - 10 years	> 10 years
Experience using targeted grazing to achieve habitat objectives for migratory waterbird species	None	< 5 years	5 - 10 years	> 10 years
Experience using targeted grazing to manage invasive plant species	None	< 5 years	5 - 10 years	> 10 years
Experience using targeted grazing to achieve habitat objectives for species of special concern (threatened and endangered species)	None	< 5 years	5 - 10 years	> 10 years

Ranking Criteria	Scoring Criteria – 0 to 3 based on ability and experience in written responses			
	0	1	2	3
Ability and experience using grazing to achieve vegetation conditions.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience assisting with habitat improvement projects, such as wetland pond construction, levee maintenance, disking, seeding, mowing, and/or removal of invasive plant species.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience to move cattle within 24-hour notice between management sub-units or remove them from the Refuge in case of emergency.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience maintaining grazing infrastructure (e.g., fencing, corrals, gates, water systems, etc.).	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience inspecting cattle and infrastructure daily.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience to respond within 1 hour to emergencies such as escaped cattle, fence breaches, water system failures, or circumstances related to public safety.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience to monitor flood conditions and remove cattle when flooding is imminent.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience
Ability and experience to determine health of cattle before transferring to Service property.	None	Ability and limited experience	Ability and some experience	Ability and extensive experience

Ranking Criteria	Scoring Criteria (Points)	
	0	1
Current ranching cooperator on private lands or grazing lease holder on public lands.	No	Yes
Ability to obtain and hold liability insurance as outlined under <i>Liability Insurance Requirements</i> .	No	Yes
Ability to own or have legally binding contract to own 150 or more head of cattle prior to start of agreement date.	No	Yes
Currently possess equipment (e.g., trucks, trailers, etc.) and staff to manage grazing operations and improve grazing infrastructure.	No	Yes
No delinquencies on any prior stipulations on private or public lands.	No	Yes

## Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Information

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the primary Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish, wildlife, and plant populations, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Refuge is located in the Central Valley, south of Sacramento, adjacent to Interstate 5 and the urban areas of the city of Elk Grove and is comprised of 2,084 acres in Fee Title ownership, 2,933 acres under Cooperative Agreements and 1,533 acres under Conservation Easement. Most of the grasslands are within the 100-year floodplain of the Stone Lakes Basin and are an important part of a corridor of habitats serving migratory birds and species of special concern in the region. The grazing objectives under this CAA are based upon the goal outlined in the Stone Lakes NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS, 2007): Goal 1. Conserve, enhance, restore, and manage Central Valley wetland, riparian, grassland, and other native habitats to benefit their associated fish, wildlife, plants, and special status species.

### Land Use History

Lands now managed by the Refuge were once a part of thriving Miwok communities prior to the arrival of European settlers in the late 1800s. European settlers began farming and ranching in the area changing the landscape from predominately large tule marshes, riparian corridors, and perennial grasslands to farming, and annual grasslands with levees to control flooding.

### Climate and Weather

Sacramento County coast has a Mediterranean climate characterized by hot temperatures in the summer and mild winters. Rainfall averages around 19 inches annually but can vary widely, droughts and flooding are common as much of the Refuge lies within the 100-year floodplain of the Stone Lakes Basin. Annual precipitation is most common from October through March. Although the climate is considered moderate, temperatures vary widely throughout the year, with lows near 35 °F to highs in the 100's °F.

### Grassland Management Units

The Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Stone Lakes NWR (USFWS 2007) and subsequent additions to the plan outlines four management units comprised of approximately 2,290 acres (1,960 acres of dry pasture, 330 irrigated pasture/wet meadow) that have been scheduled for grazing: North Stone Lake Unit, Gallagher Unit (North and South), and Sun River Unit (Figure 1).

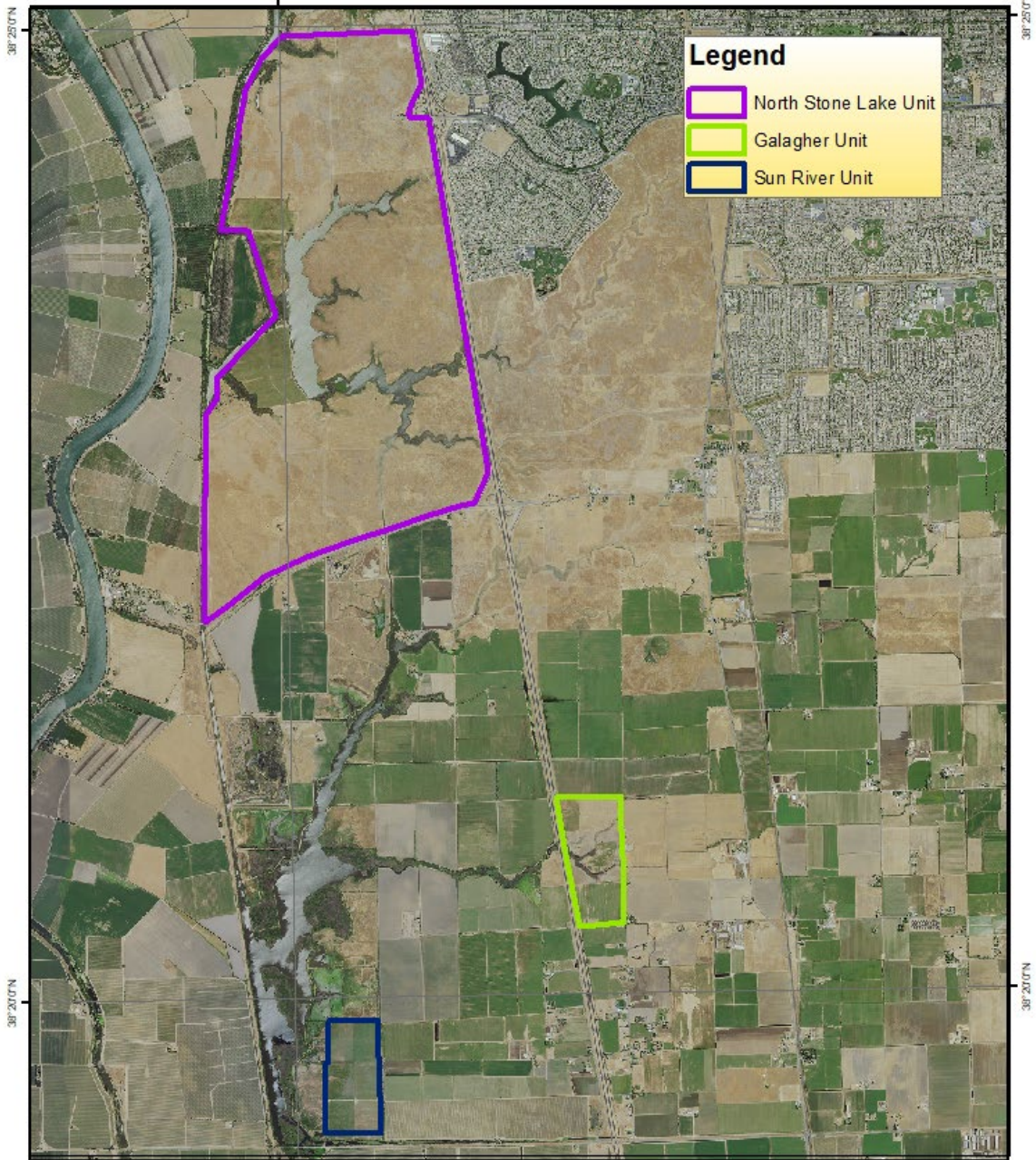
These units are comprised primarily of annual grasslands in dry and irrigated pastures. Common grassland species in dry grasslands include wild oats (*Avena fatua*), soft chess (*Bromus molis*), annual fescue (*Vulpia spp.*), Italian ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*), annual ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*). Irrigated pasture units include Dallis grass (*Paspalum dilatatum*), Italian ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). Native perennial grasses include bearded wild rye (*Lymus triticoides*), saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), clustered field sedge (*Carex praegracilis*), wire rush (*Juncus balticus*), meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*) and spike rush (*Eleocharis machrostacya*).

The North Stone Lake Unit (Figure 2) has both dry and irrigated pasture/wet meadow with surface pumps for irrigation of the pasture. The property was purchased in the early 1970's by Sacramento County Parks and California State Parks and cattle were removed from the property. After establishment of the Stone Lakes NWR, the Service entered into long-term management agreements to manage the property as part of the Refuge with the objective of restoring and managing the grasslands, wetlands and riparian habitats for the benefit of a variety of migratory and resident wildlife. The Refuge is using cattle grazing as a tool to create short grass habitat for a variety of grassland dependent species including the California listed greater sandhill crane, arctic nesting geese, shorebirds, grassland dependent songbirds, and federally threatened vernal pool tadpole shrimp. The property is prone to flooding every 5-7 years. The property is adjacent to Interstate 5, and fences need to be monitored daily for breaches, etc. due to vehicle accidents, and trespass issues.

The Gallagher Unit (Figure 3) has North and South Subunits and both dry and irrigated pasture/wet meadow with surface pumps and groundwater wells. Long term management and restoration plans are still being developed. Currently cattle grazing is being used as a tool to maintain short grass habitat and control noxious weeds for a variety of grassland dependent species including the California listed greater sandhill crane, a variety of arctic nesting geese, and grassland dependent songbirds. The property is adjacent to Interstate 5, and fences need to be monitored daily for breaches, etc. due to vehicle accidents, and trespass issues.

The Sun River Unit (Figure 4) is irrigated pasture/wet meadow with surface pumps. Long term management and restoration plans are still being developed and will likely include conversion to a wetland complex within the next 5 years. Currently cattle grazing is being used as a tool to maintain short grass habitat and control noxious weeds for a variety of grassland dependent species including the California listed greater sandhill crane, a variety of arctic nesting geese, shorebirds, grassland dependent songbirds and winter flooding for waterfowl and shorebirds. The property is prone to flooding every 5-7 years.

Grazing infrastructure including fencing, corrals and water systems, is currently in place on all units. The Refuge has an extensive road system with access to grassland units on paved roads. Interior dirt and gravel roads provide reliable access to key portions of the refuge in the dry season; however, access during the winter, especially following rain events in grassland units is limited to ORUV or horseback. All grazing units have metal or wooden corrals and a water system and cattle troughs that are filled through groundwater wells or surface water pumps. All units have received grazing treatments in the past ten years. Infrastructure improvements are needed in the Gallagher Unit prior to grazing in some areas. The existing corral will likely be removed in the fall of 2022. Improvements may include construction and/or modification of fencing, gates, corrals, and water delivery systems. The cooperator will work with Refuge management to prioritize annual infrastructure, and restoration projects and grazing rotations.



Produced by: Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge  
Pacific Southwest Region - Sacramento, CA  
Produced By: Bethix Treister  
Date: January 10, 2022  
Projection: UTM Zone 10N, NAD83  
Base map: 2014 S D  
Name: CAA Map Grazing Units



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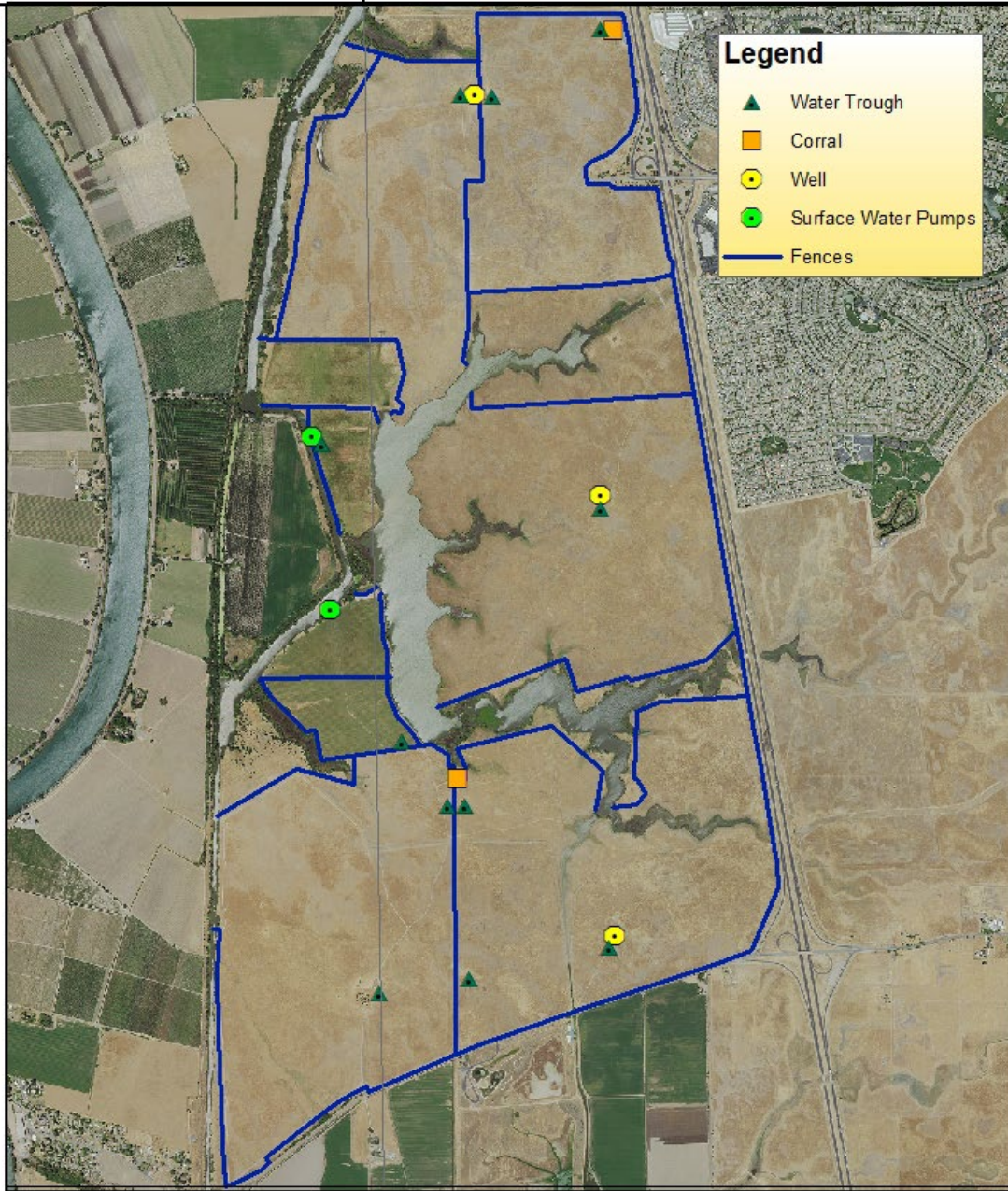


Figure 1. Map of grazing units for CAA on the Stone Lakes NWR.

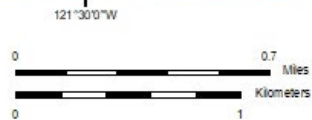


38°25'07"N

121°30'0"W



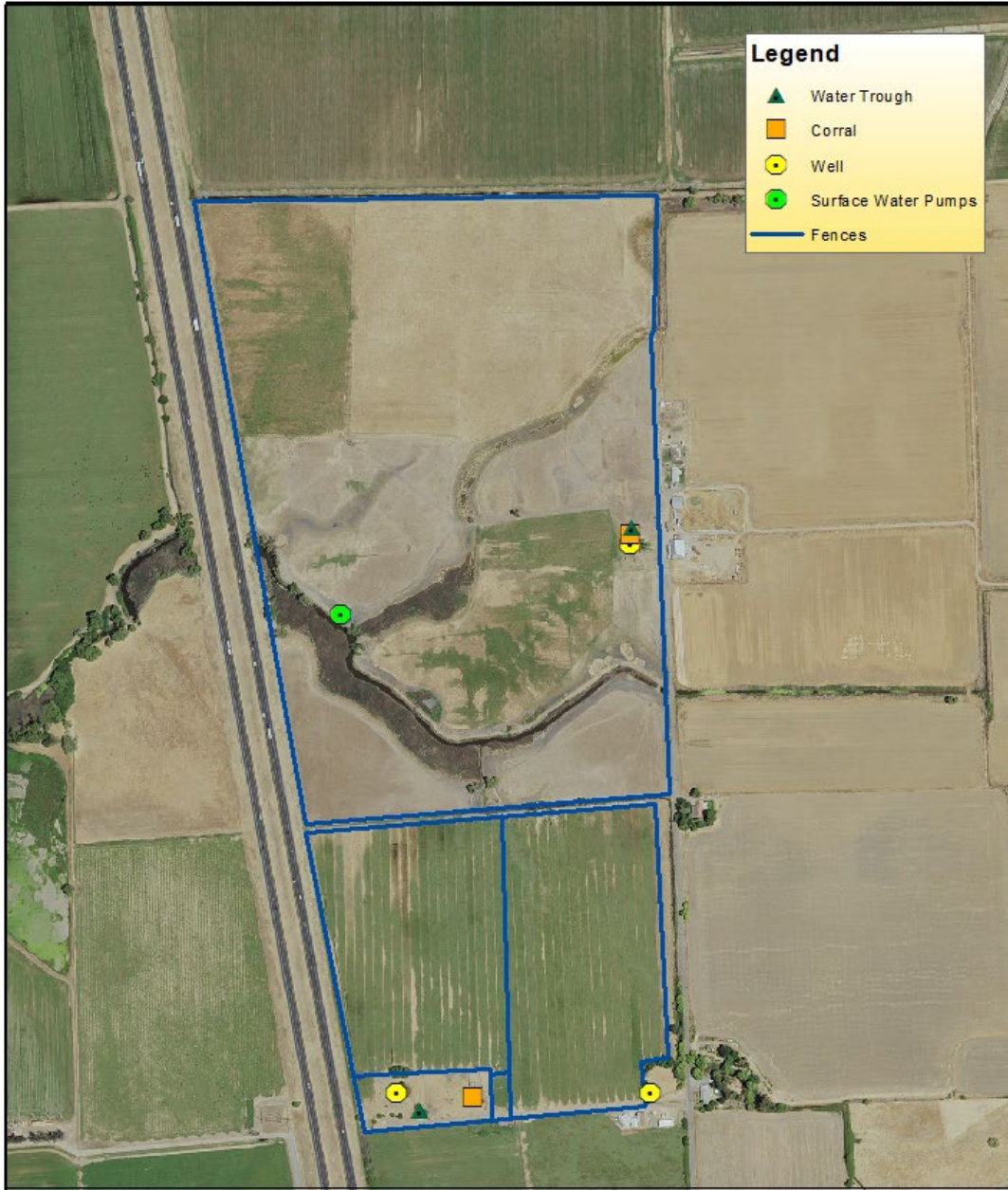
Produced by: Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge  
Pacific Southwest Region - Sacramento, CA  
Produced By: Bethix Treister  
Date: January 10, 2022  
Projection: UTM Zone 10N, NAD83  
Base map: 2014 S D  
Name: CIA Map Grazing Units



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Figure 2. North Stone Lake Unit map with grazing infrastructure.



Produced by: Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge  
Pacific Southwest Region - Sacramento, CA  
Produced By: Beatrix Treister  
Date: January 21, 2022  
Projection: UTM Zone 10N, NAD83  
Basemap: 2014 S.D.  
Name: CA Map Grazing Units



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Figure 3. Gallagher Units irrigated pasture/wet meadow map with grazing infrastructure.

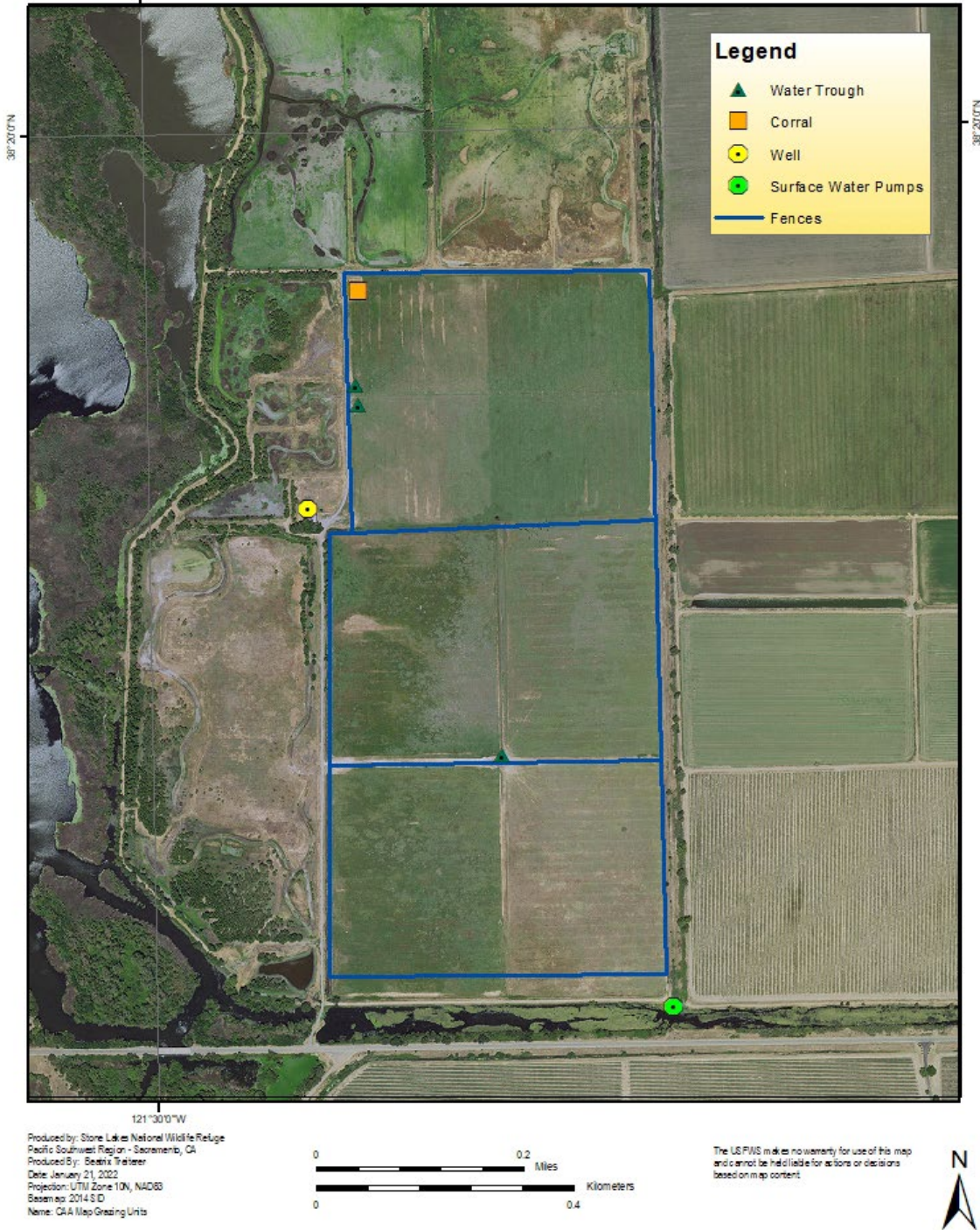


Figure 4. Sun River irrigated pasture/wet meadow map with grazing infrastructure.



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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY  
APPLICATION



*APPLICANT INFORMATION:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tax ID #: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Work  Cell

*GRAZING SELECTION CRITERIA:* Please complete the questions below. Attach additional pages if necessary.

1. Describe your experience managing livestock grazing operations in California grasslands. Please include number of years' experience and size and location of your operation.
2. Describe your experience grazing to benefit wildlife habitat and migratory waterbird species. Please include number of years' experience.
3. Describe your experience grazing to manage invasive plant species. Please include number of years' experience.
4. Are you currently managing ranching operations on private lands and/or public lands? Please describe operations in detail.
5. Do you currently possess or have the ability to obtain and hold liability insurance as described under the Liability Insurance Requirements (Page 4)?



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY  
APPLICATION



6. Do you currently own, or have the ability to possess a sufficient number of cattle to achieve the grazing objectives of the Refuge? Can you provide proof of ownership if you are selected?
  
7. Do you possess the ability and capacity to graze for the total length of time and recommended stocking rates, or until target vegetation conditions are achieved?
  
8. Do you possess the ability to inspect cattle and infrastructure daily?
  
9. Describe your experience to assist with habitat improvement projects, such as riparian restoration, wetland construction, levee maintenance, disking, mowing, and seeding of beneficial plant species, and spraying or removal of non-native invasive plant species?
  
10. Do you possess the flexibility to move cattle between management units and remove them from the Refuge within 24 hours during an emergency (i.e. flooding or fire)? Do you have grazing lands outside of the refuge where you can move cattle if needed?
  
11. Please explain your professional experience maintaining extensive infrastructure, including fencing, corrals, gates, and water systems.
  
12. Do you currently possess the equipment (e.g., trucks, trailers, tractors, fencing tools, water pumps, horses, etc.) and staff necessary to manage grazing operations and maintain and improve grazing infrastructure? Please describe



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY  
APPLICATION



13. Do you possess the ability to immediately respond (within 1 hour) to emergency situations such as escaped cattle, fencing breaches, water system failures, wildfires, or other circumstances affecting public safety or health of cattle?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Are you or have you ever been delinquent on any prior stipulations on private or public lands? If so, please explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Describe how you would determine when grassland units are ready for cattle grazing.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Describe how you would evaluate and determine the stocking rate to meet the performance objectives.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. Describe your experience working with a federal, state or local agency or other organization to meet objectives related to threatened and endangered species conservation, migratory bird habitat management, and/or invasive plant control.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
18. Describe your procedure to determine the health of your livestock prior to being introduced to Service property.



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY  
APPLICATION



**Livestock Operating Experience:** Please provide information for each property that you currently graze. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Property 1:

- a) Location and size (acres):
- b) Description of rangeland/vegetation/topography:
- c) Season of use:
- d) Specific wildlife or plant habitat objectives:
- e) Number and type of livestock grazed:
- f) Name and contact information (telephone, email) of landowner or property manager:

Property 2:

- a) Location and size (acres):
- b) Description of rangeland/vegetation/topography:
- c) Season of use:
- d) Specific wildlife or plant habitat objectives:
- e) Number and type of livestock grazed:
- f) Name and contact information (telephone, email) of landowner or property manager:



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY  
APPLICATION



Property 3:

- a) Location and size (acres):
  
- b) Description of rangeland/vegetation/topography:
  
- c) Season of use:
  
- d) Specific wildlife or plant habitat objectives:
  
- e) Number and type of livestock grazed:
  
- f) Name and contact information (telephone, email) of landowner or property manager:

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reserves the right to reject any or all applicants.*

**I have read, and if selected, agree to the permit conditions listed within this Cooperative Agricultural Opportunity?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Notice: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501, et seq) And the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) please be advised that:

1. The permitting of economic and public uses on lands of the National Wildlife Refuge System is authorized by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668 dd-ee) and the Refuge Administration Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460 k-n), implemented in regulations in 43 CFR 24.3 and 50 CFR subchapter C.
2. The application form will be used by Service personnel to evaluate the qualification and to conclude the eligibility of the applicant.
3. Routine use disclosures may also be made (1) to the U.S. Department of Justice when related to litigation or anticipate litigation; (2) of information indicating a violation or potential violation of a statute, regulation, rule, order or license to appropriate Federal, State, local or foreign agencies responsible for investigating or prosecuting the violation or for enforcing or implementing the statute, rule, regulation, order or license; (3) from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from a Congressional office made at the request of that individual (42 FR 19083; April 11, 1977).
4. The information requested in this application form is purely voluntary, but failure to answer questions may jeopardize the eligibility of individuals to receive permits.



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



### COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY

#### SPECIAL CONDITIONS

The Service is seeking grazing applicants with experience in achieving target vegetation conditions to benefit fish, wildlife, and plant species. The successful applicant will be required to adhere to the following Special Conditions:

1. **Habitat Management:** The primary objective of this cooperative agreement is to use grazing as a tool to create, improve, and maintain habitats for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and plant species. Grasslands will be managed to provide quality habitat for wintering, migratory, and resident bird species and species of concern.
  - a. It is the cooperators responsibility to provide and/or maintain quality short grassland conditions (600 to +2400 lbs RDM per the Refuge Manager grazing plan for the unit). Methods may include grazing, mowing, restoration of native grasses through seeding or grass plugs.
  - b. Intermittent soil testing may be conducted to determine the need for soil amendments (fertilizer, lime, etc.). The cost for soil testing, as well as liming, fertilization, or other amendments will be the responsibility of the cooperator and deducted from annual grazing fees.
  
2. **Grazing:**
  - a. Season of use will be November 1<sup>st</sup> through April/May for dry pasture and April/May through October 31<sup>st</sup> for irrigated/wet meadow units. The Service does not guarantee grazing opportunities during the grazing period. Stocking rates, periods of use, and turn-in and turn-out dates are subject to change by the Service due to environmental conditions such as drought or flood, forage availability, or other unforeseen circumstances.
  - b. Grazing will not be permitted outside of the grazing period determined for the dry or irrigated pastures. The grazing cooperator will be required to remove all cattle from the Refuge unit at the end of each grazing period.
  - c. The Service reserves the right to modify the grazing period, animal unit months, compensation, or terminate the Special User Permit (SUP) if conditions warrant.
  - d. The cooperator will notify the Refuge Manager within 5 days of changes in cattle numbers and/or their locations. An accurate record of cattle numbers and locations will be provided within 24 hours of request to the Refuge Manager.
  - e. The Service does not guarantee the quality or availability of forage for livestock. However, if grasslands are dominated by non-forage plants, forage fees may be adjusted annually based upon the percent of total grassland acreage effected. Those grasslands which are inaccessible due to standing water or restoration may also be subtracted from the total available acres.



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



### COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY

#### SPECIAL CONDITIONS

- f. Grazing will be restricted to designated areas of the Refuge. Stocking rates and grazing periods are dependent upon forage availability and habitat management objectives, as determined by the Refuge Manager.
  - g. The cooperators will be always responsible for containing cattle within permitted areas on the Refuge.
  - h. The cooperators are responsible for ensuring that cattle do not access areas closed to grazing, including all fenced riparian, wetland, and habitat restoration areas.
  - i. The annual billing period will be November 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. Billing for grazing fees and reconciliation of cost-sharing incentives will be administered in November of each year.
3. Infrastructure
- a. The cooperators will be responsible for maintaining and improving all grazing infrastructure (fences, gates, corrals, watering systems, etc.). The cooperators and Refuge Manager will work closely together to prioritize infrastructure projects.
  - b. Water systems, fencing, roads and other infrastructure may not be altered without prior approval of the Refuge Manager.
  - c. With approval from the Refuge Manager, the cooperators may deduct the cost of materials and labor from annual grazing operations.
  - d. The cooperators shall provide the Service with receipts and other documentation regarding the costs of infrastructure improvements and labor.
  - e. Costs of unauthorized infrastructure projects and/or labor will be borne by the cooperators and will not be deducted from annual grazing owed to the Service.
  - f. All materials associated with infrastructure improvements will become the property of the Service unless determined otherwise by the Refuge Manager in writing.
4. Operating Rules and Laws
- a. To be eligible for this grazing opportunity, the applicant must be the sole owner of the livestock. Subletting is not permitted.
  - b. The cooperators must be able to document ownership of all cattle on the Refuge, which will be tagged or marked with a brand by the age of 6 months. The cooperators must provide the Refuge Manager with descriptions of cattle brands or tags. This information will be included in the "Record of Payments" provided annually.
  - c. The cooperators must acquire and maintain liability insurance that indemnifies and holds the Service harmless from any liability claims associated with the cooperators' livestock operation on Service land. All liability relating to livestock and livestock management, to include all persons working for the cooperators, whether related, hired or as a partner is strictly that of the cooperators as listed on the SUP.
  - d. Except for allotted grazing units, the cooperators shall not prohibit the public from entering Service lands. The cooperators shall not harass/interfere with the public in any way that distracts from the enjoyment of Service lands.



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



### COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY

#### SPECIAL CONDITIONS

- e. The cooperator must obtain written approval from the Refuge Manager prior to the use of pesticides or hormone treatments. This stipulation also applies to cattle that are scheduled to be moved to the Refuge in the future.
- f. Service policy prohibits the use of GMOs and neonicotinoids on Refuge lands. Pesticides must be pre-approved under a pesticide use permit (PUP) for the Refuge.
- g. All approved chemical applications will be conducted in accordance with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation and adhere to label instructions.
- h. The cooperator must comply with State of California health and sanitation requirements. If a disease is suspected or known to exist within livestock on the Refuge, the cooperator must inform the Refuge Manager immediately.
- i. The only permitted use of firearms on the Refuge will be to euthanize ill or injured cattle, or those that pose a threat to human safety (e.g., escaped cattle on roadways). In cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, firearms may also be considered to mitigate predation events. The use of lead ammunition is strictly forbidden on the Refuge. The Refuge Manager will be contacted prior to the use of firearms and the location of euthanized cattle or predators will be promptly reported to the Refuge manager.
- j. Grazing units are closed to the public. Only authorized individuals conducting activities on behalf of the Service are permitted within these areas.
- k. The cooperator is not authorized to change, alter, or interfere with contractors conducting official business with or on behalf of the Service.
- l. Under no circumstances is the cooperator to trespass on private properties adjacent to the Refuge. If there is a perceived need to enter such properties, the Refuge Manager will be contacted.
- m. The cooperator will immediately notify the Refuge Manager of suspected trespass events (e.g., cut fences, illegal hunting, driving, dumping, etc.).
- n. Domestic animals on the Refuge, such as dogs used in moving cattle, must have current vaccinations and always be under the control of the owner. Dogs are not allowed to roam freely or chase wildlife on the Refuge.
- o. The Service or the cooperator may terminate a CAA with 45 days' notice if either party is not carrying out their roles and responsibilities under the CAA. Additionally, the Service may terminate the CAA immediately if necessary to protect human or wildlife health or safety.
- p. Within 30 days of cancelation of the CAA, all personal equipment will be removed from the Refuge.
- q. Noncompliance with any conditions of the SUP may result in revocation of the permit by the Refuge Manager. Revocation of SUP will result in permanent forfeiture of future grazing opportunities.



United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY  
SPECIAL CONDITIONS

5. Damages

- a. The United States shall not be held responsible for any loss or damage of property on or off the Refuge, or injury to the cooperator or his/her representatives, or for any damages caused by wildlife or employees/representatives of the federal government carrying out their official responsibilities.
- b. Any damages occurring to the Refuge or adjacent private properties resulting from the cooperator, his/her representatives, and/or equipment shall be the sole responsibility of the cooperator. In such cases, the cooperator shall be responsible for expenses, repairs, or other agreed upon forms of compensation.

**By signing, the cooperator applicant agrees to abide by the outlined Special Conditions.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

