

Current Drought Impacts To the Sacramento National Wildlife Complex:

- Refuges are primarily seasonal users of water and typically receive water during periods of low demand by agriculture. Most water on refuges supports spring and fall migrations and wintering populations of waterfowl and other migratory birds. Refuges are also located inside a "sea of agricultural lands" and water used by refuges is passed down the system for other uses, including agriculture and environmental uses.
- Spring 2015 wetland drawdowns were staggered as part of the water conservation strategy to make optimal use of re-using the water for irrigations of moist soil plant germination/seed production for waterfowl.
- During the spring/summer of 2015, less water was used to provide irrigation to the desirable plants and treat invasive plants on some of the refuges. The lack of water will result in a lower food production and less control of invasive plant species resulting in reduced quality of habitat.
- The Complex is planning to hold 10-15% of the managed wetlands dry through the 2015-16 winter. Some of these units may be flooded as the monthly water use is assessed. The flooding of wetlands is being prioritized to make sure wetlands that have the best habitat, highest bird use, and best soils are being flooded first.
- The fall 2015 flood-up schedules are being planned later than usual which will result in: less water use, less early decomposition of food (seeds), less mosquito control, and reduced growth of invasive species. Unfortunately, this may result in: less habitat for early migrant birds, further crowding of more birds into limited fall habitat and potential disease problems, potential for increased crop depredation, reduction of percent flooded habitat by opening day of the 2015-2016 waterfowl season resulting in reduced hunting reservations and quotas, and reduced wildlife viewing and photography opportunities on the auto tours, trails, and photography blinds. Refuge staff will monitor real-time bird populations and habitat in the Sacramento Valley to help determine the rate of fall floodup on all refuges in the Complex.
- Currently, Sutter NWR does not receive Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) water and it is expected that units within the Sutter Bypass will not be flooded due to curtailment of post 1914 water rights by the state of California. Waterfowl sanctuary units outside of the Bypass are expected to be partially flooded during the fall, but maintaining them may be challenging as water will not be available to maintain the wetlands through the late fall and winter. This area is not open to the public.
- Many areas of the Llano Seco Unit of North Central Valley WMA are expected to be flooded around November 1.