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$1 Million Federal Grant for San Joaquin Valley Wetlands Conservation

Washington, D.C. – The collaboration between Ducks Unlimited, Grassland Water District, the State of California’s Wildlife Conservation Board and Department of Water Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and local private land owners to conserve wetlands within the northern San Joaquin Valley was awarded a $1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant this week.

The project, officially titled “San Joaquin Wetlands Conservation III,” will both restore 1,340 acres of floodplain wetlands on the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge and enhance 2,207 acres of wetlands and upland habitats in the Grasslands Ecological Area.

By pooling state grants and private dollars, and then leveraging them for matching federal funds, this partnership aims to increase Grassland Water District’s ability to recycle and deliver water within its district, improve water conveyance to San Luis National Wildlife Refuge, and reconnect the San Joaquin River to its floodplain. This will reduce downstream flooding, improve private wetlands to benefit waterfowl, and provide wildlife habitat for salmon, waterfowl, and songbirds.

Ric Ortega, General Manager of Grassland Water District, shared, “The grant-and-match funding emphasizes the ongoing partnership to deliver and manage large-scale habitat restoration projects in the San Joaquin Valley, which is widely recognized as one of the most critical habitat areas in North America. These wetlands are also critical to our local economy, groundwater sustainability, and water quality, especially given the fact that only 5% of wetlands remain in California.”

“Programs funded through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act are a prime example of how public and private collaboration can deliver ecosystem-based conservation projects benefitting wildlife and people alike,” said Matt Kaminski, Ducks Unlimited Regional Biologist. Kaminski continued, “In delivering these projects, Ducks Unlimited will hire local...
contractors to construct these projects, thus benefitting wetland habitat, waterfowl, wildlife enthusiasts, and the local economy in Merced and Stanislaus Counties.”

**Congressman Jim Costa (CA-16), a long-time supporter of the NAWCA,** said, “The Wetlands are an integral part of our San Joaquin Valley and vital for the economy in Merced County. They contribute roughly $73 million dollars to the county, and their additional benefits to groundwater recharge are extensive. I have always believed that government most effectively serves our communities when local, state, and federal governments work together, which is why I am a strong advocate for partnership programs, such as those authorized in the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.”

The San Joaquin Wetlands Conservation III project is the third phase in a five-phase initiative to conserve wetlands and associated habitats in Merced and Stanislaus Counties. The San Joaquin Valley is recognized as one of the most important North American wintering areas for waterfowl.

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