

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1049

Recognizing the significance of California ricelands to wildlife conservation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 7, 2022

Mr. THOMPSON of California (for himself, Mr. COSTA, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. LAMALFA, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. PANETTA, and Mr. VALADAO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the significance of California ricelands to wildlife conservation.

Whereas the California Rice Commission works, on behalf of its farmers and millers, to enhance and sustain wildlife resources in California's great Central Valley;

Whereas California rice is commonly referred to as the "Environmental Crop";

Whereas California rice growers have effectively developed and utilized innovative water conservation strategies, such as recirculation and laser leveling, to use 20 percent less water to grow 25 percent more rice;

Whereas the California Rice Commission has aggressively developed solar projects to generate approximately 75 per-

cent of the electrical power needs for its drying and milling operations;

Whereas the California rice growers reduced their rice straw burning by approximately 90 percent and shifted to winter flooding to decompose rice straw, a practice that dramatically improved regional air quality and is now essential habitat for waterbirds in the Pacific Flyway;

Whereas California rice growers transform their working wetland agriculture to surrogate habitat for migrating waterbirds by adopting conservation practices to sustain and enhance these critical habitat areas;

Whereas the University of California, Davis, and the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, working collaboratively with the rice industry, conducts research and outreach where University of California Cooperative Extension production guidelines have been widely adopted by growers resulting in sustainable and economic rice production, while providing a host of ecosystem services such as improved natural habitat and water quality;

Whereas the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service has partnered with the California Rice Commission to invest approximately \$30,000,000 over the past decade to implement annual riceland habitat enhancement projects benefitting the Pacific Flyway;

Whereas the California Rice Commission works closely with many highly recognized wildlife conservation organizations focused on maintaining California's wildlife-friendly rice acres that are now essential for the health of the Pacific Flyway;

Whereas California rice provides over 50 percent of the food consumed by the 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 waterfowl that reside in the Central Valley each winter;

Whereas California's 500,000 acres of ricelands serve as "surrogate wetlands" that are now essential to supporting hundreds of wetland-dependent species in a State that has lost more than 90 percent of its historic wetlands;

Whereas California's ricelands are designated as a Shorebird Habitat of International Significance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network;

Whereas the Central Valley Joint Venture's 2020 Implementation Plan significantly relies upon flooded ricelands to meet its California habitat objectives that are integral to goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, which the United States ratified in 1986; and

Whereas science has demonstrated that floodplain wetlands are critical energy sources for river ecosystems, for both fish populations as well as water birds, and the California rice industry, working with its salmon recovery partners, is testing and developing strategies to "reactivate" portions of the historic Sacramento Valley floodplain to enhance juvenile salmon rearing habitat in winter-flooded rice fields and improve the delivery of flood-plain derived fish food resources from rice fields to juvenile salmon in the Sacramento River: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives recog-
- 2 nizes the significance of the California ricelands as essen-
- 3 tial Pacific Flyway habitat and supports the collective ef-
- 4 forts of the California rice industry, water management

1 agencies, university researchers, and wildlife conservation
2 partners to continue conservation efforts, strongly sup-
3 ported by Congress through its Farm Bill conservation
4 programs, to preserve and enhance California riceland
5 habitats for future generations to enjoy.

