

Central Valley Joint Venture – Willow Creek Project

Butte and Colusa NAWCA projects

A series of NAWCA projects in the Butte and Colusa drainage basins of the Central Valley emphasize increased efficiency of water use and improved water supply and delivery to key wetland areas. Water for wetlands in the Central Valley is limited and will become more so in the future, especially in the face of climate change, emphasizing the need to maximize habitat benefits with water that is available. Many public and private partners have contributed to the success of these project accomplishments. One outstanding example is the Willow Creek Ranch, an area of about 7,050 acres of privately owned wetlands and wildlife-friendly rice lands located adjacent to two national wildlife refuges. The area is divided into numerous ownerships which are serviced by the same water company. In the past the water conveyance infrastructure was degraded and water use efficiency could not be optimized. Although some individual owners improved habitat and infrastructure on their properties, existing topography and infrastructure limited water use efficiency and water and habitat management capabilities within many other areas. Although there have been efforts in the past to make repairs to this degraded system, a comprehensive upgrade was needed. Enter Ducks Unlimited, Willow Creek Mutual Water Company, and numerous private landowners. Through a series of NAWCA projects on the Ranch, individual clubs have been refurbished by DU and California Waterfowl Association and a landscape approach to water conveyance is underway. Project work will increase water efficiency, allowing the water to be reused up to 5 times before leaving the ranch; reduce mosquito production and the risk of mosquito borne diseases; and improve wetland management capabilities. This bigger picture approach to wetland conservation, together with an outstanding partnership, is improving habitat on the scale needed to achieve the CVJV's conservation objectives in these basins and serve as a model for future conservation efforts in the valley.