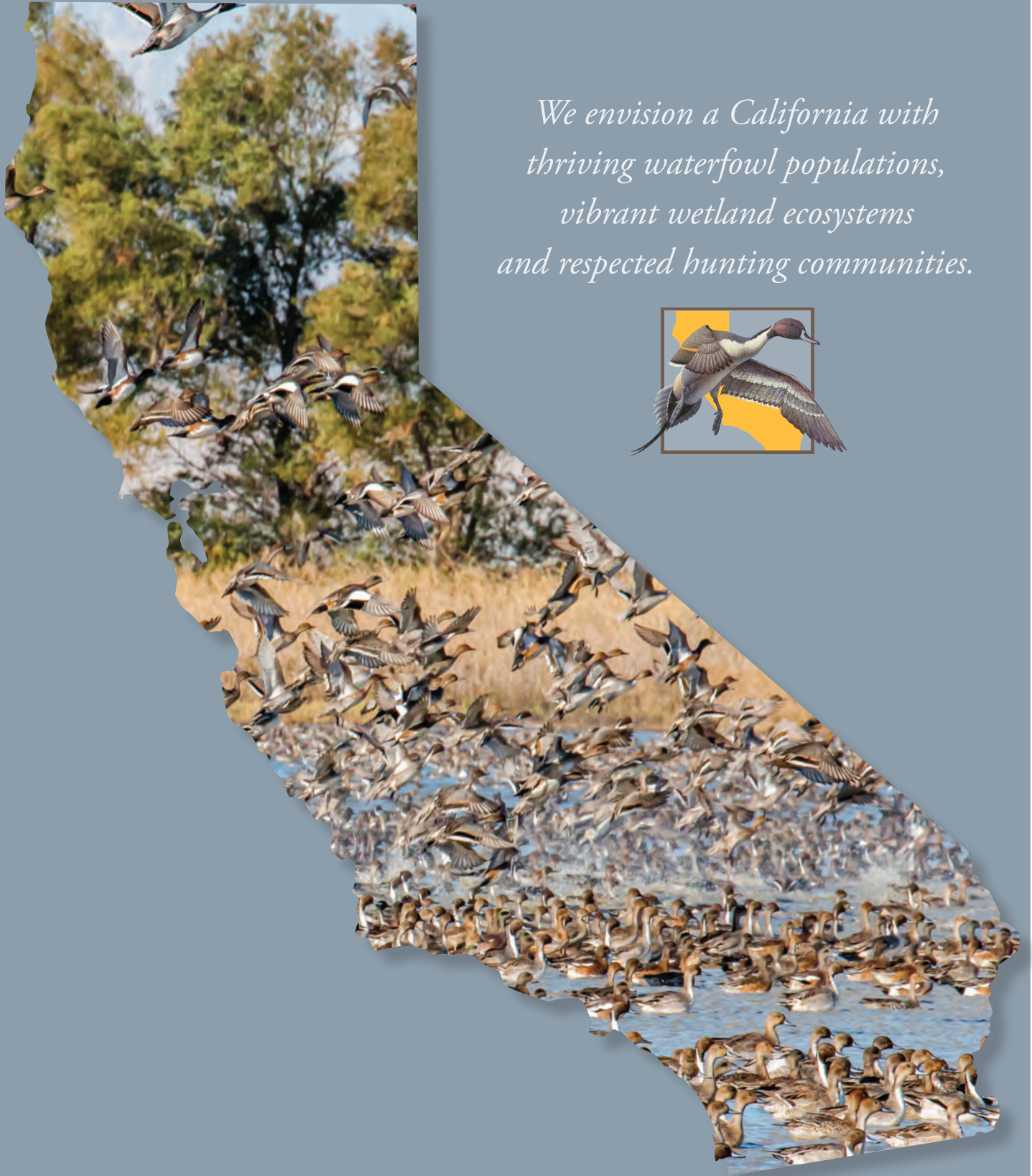
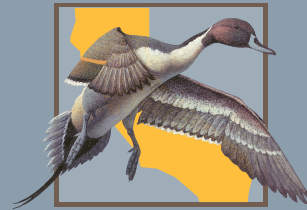


# California Waterfowl Strategic Plan

2018-2023



*We envision a California with thriving waterfowl populations, vibrant wetland ecosystems and respected hunting communities.*

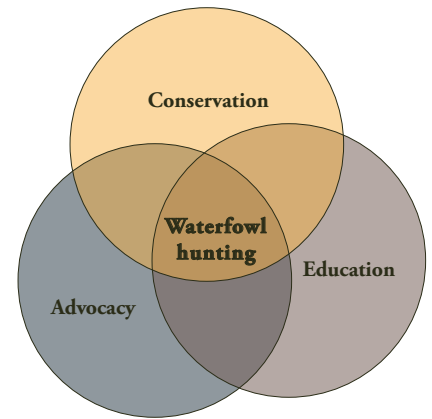


# Our mission

*To grow California's waterfowl populations, wetlands and hunter-conservationist communities*

## What is California Waterfowl?

California Waterfowl is a 501c3 hunter-founded and -supported conservation organization whose mission is to grow California's waterfowl, wetlands and hunter-conservationist communities. Our vision is a California with thriving waterfowl populations, vibrant wetland ecosystems and respected hunting communities.



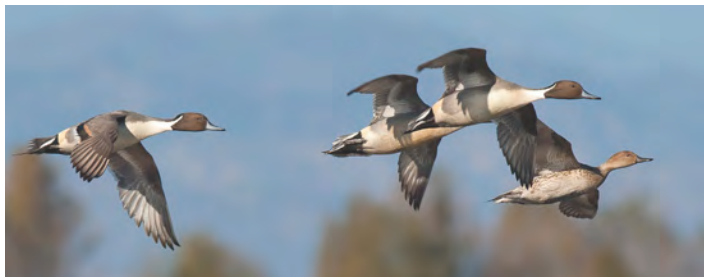
## Why our work is important

California has lost over 95% of its historic wetlands to urban and agricultural development. Of the remaining managed wetlands, roughly 60% persist on privately owned land and are financed and managed by duck hunters.

Revenue generated from hunting licenses sales and self-imposed excise taxes on gun and ammo purchases fund the vast majority of wetland habitat management on public lands. But California has experienced a large decline in the number of waterfowl hunters since the

1970s, when roughly 250,000 people hunted waterfowl, compared with about 70,000 today. That loss, coupled with California's rapidly growing human population, societal views towards guns and hunting and growing demand for limited water and land resources, threatens the financial structure and sustainability of California's wetlands.

Alternative funding sources have been and continue to be explored, but none have come close to the contributions made by waterfowl hunters. As such, we believe that the waterfowl hunting community is as relevant as ever, and we must do all that we can to support it. At the same time, we recognize that we can't do it alone and will need to develop strong partnerships to ensure the future of waterfowl, wetlands and hunting.



## How we operate

We restore habitat, advocate for wildlife-friendly policies, fight for wetland water supplies and work to inspire the next generation of conservationists.

We also believe it is important to support our hunting base and engage conservation-minded people and groups to help us tackle the biggest impediments to recruiting new wetland enthusiasts: access, cost and mentorship.

Going forward, we plan to open more land for hunting and other outdoor recreation. We will invite more people to experience and share quality outdoor experiences on lands that we manage.

And we will nurture their pursuits in the field and marsh in hopes they'll develop a lasting passion for the outdoors that will be passed to the next generation.

## Our values

*Stewardship | Sustainability | Integrity | Accountability | Passion | Dedication | Community | Family | Inclusion | Diversity | Innovation*

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## What we've accomplished in the past 20 years

- Completed 1,400 projects to protect, restore, enhance and manage nearly 700,000 acres, providing habitat for millions of birds and other animals.
- Provided quality outdoor experiences to over 6,000 people through our Hunt Program.
- Acquired six properties totaling more than 5,000 acres to create Hunting, Conservation and Education Centers.
- Expanded seasons and limits for geese, increased public hunting access and passed a number of bills that support hunting and wetland conservation efforts.
- Hatched more than 830,000 ducklings through the Egg Salvage and California Wood Duck programs.
- Banded 260,000 birds to monitor, evaluate and grow waterfowl populations.
- Educated more than 320,000 people about wetland conservation and hunters' role in it.
- Engaged more than 2,000 dedicated and tireless volunteers.



## Going forward

California Waterfowl has established the following strategies for 2018-23:

### **I**ncrease advocacy impact at state/federal levels.

Protect hunting rights and wetland water supplies. Advocate for wildlife-friendly agriculture. Support regulations that expand hunting opportunity and hunter recruitment. Increase state and federal funding for habitat and wetland water supplies. Mobilize members to support advocacy efforts. Build relationships with state and federal lawmakers to help advance our mission.

### **E**xpand waterfowl and wetland conservation.

Increase acres of wetlands acquired, protected, restored, enhanced and managed. Work with partners to restore wetlands through grants and privately funded projects. Evaluate and grow waterfowl populations.

### **G**row hunting opportunity, access and quality.

Acquire land that allows the integration of program activities for maximum impact. Grow opportunities and participation in the Hunt Program. Increase awareness of and participation in the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman and Veteran Hunt programs.

### **G**row hunter and conservation education.

Train and mentor new hunters. Teach non-hunters about waterfowl and wetland ecology and hunters' role in conservation. Grow participation in hunter conservation camps and other training events. Increase non-hunting conservation education. Cultivate and inspire the next generation of conservation leaders.

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## Wetlands Goal: Protect, restore, enhance and manage 50,000 acres

While other organizations do great work conserving wetlands in other states and countries, we remain focused on California and dedicate all of our time and resources to local issues.

Besides the obvious function of providing habitat for waterfowl and hundreds of other wildlife species, wetlands filter our drinking water, recharge aquifers, protect us from floods and provide us with space to enjoy the outdoors and reconnect with nature. Ducks can't survive without wetlands, and neither can we. That's why we prioritize our habitat work.



Our ambitious goal of conserving 50,000 acres over the next five years comes at a time of increasing competition for land and water resources from urban, agricultural and energy development. Coupled with

prolonged drought conditions and bad policy decisions, our waterfowl populations are struggling, as evidenced by the recent historically low census of locally breeding mallards.

Now, more than ever, we need to protect our wetlands and ensure that they remain productive to support wildlife and people.

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## Waterfowl Goals: Hatch 200,000 ducklings. Hatch 1,000,000th wood duck duckling. Band 50,000 waterfowl.

Habitat work alone is often not enough to protect wildlife and inspire conservation and that's why we invest in programs that provide hands-on experiences that educate people about our impact on wildlife and what we can do to help. Our waterfowl programs seek to grow, monitor and evaluate waterfowl populations while engaging people through volunteerism and work experience.



Our Waterfowl Banding Program will continue to focus on pintails and mallards – the species of greatest interest to our community.

And our Wood Duck and Egg Salvage programs, will work toward releasing our 1,000,000th duckling into the wild while also inspiring the next generation of biologists and scientists that will

steward our waterfowl populations for years to come.

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## Hunting Goal: Provide opportunities to 15,000 hunters

It's no secret that we're a hunting organization, and we're proud of it. Hunters have provided and continue to provide the lion's share of wildlife



conservation funding, especially for managed wetlands. Roughly 60% of California's managed wetlands are privately funded and managed as duck clubs for hunting.

In addition, our public wildlife areas and refuges are also largely funded by hunters through self-imposed fees including taxes on gun and ammunition sales, hunting licenses, game tags, duck stamps and public access fees. Without the contributions of waterfowl hunters, we simply would not have the wetlands that we do now.

Unfortunately, despite our rapidly growing human population, we now have fewer hunters than any time in history. Nationwide, our numbers fell 19% between 1991 and 2016. In California, we dropped 27%.

But California is in a surprising position: While the number of waterfowl hunters in the United States has fallen 13% over that period, here it has remained about the same. This period coincides with California

## Our values

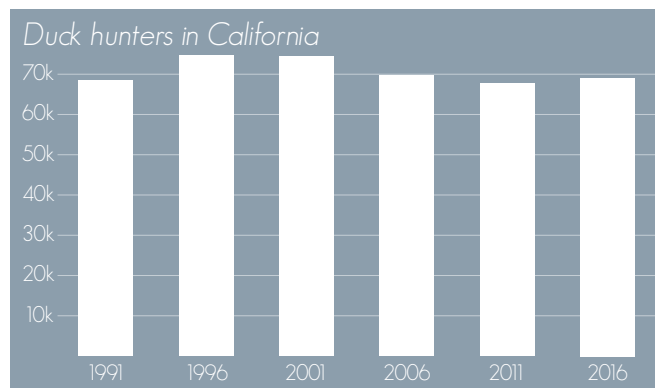
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Waterfowl's efforts to train and nurture the next generation of hunters, which started with children and has expanded to adults, who are better positioned to continue hunting on their own after we've gotten them started. This strategy has since become accepted wisdom in the nationwide "R3" movement to Recruit, Retain and Reactivate hunters.

With CWA's more recent acquisition of six duck clubs where we offer hunter training camps and public hunting, we're launching a calculated effort: We don't want to just maintain duck hunter numbers in California; we want to grow them substantially.

Research shows increasing affordable access to huntable land is the most effective way to retain existing hunters, and providing mentorship is key to retaining new hunters. CWA is doing both, and aims to aggressively expand these efforts through our Hunt Program, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program, Veteran Hunt Program and youth Hunter Conservation

Camps. We also work at the policy level to open more public lands and reduce costs to hunters.



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## Advocacy Goal: Double advocacy efforts

Waterfowl, wetlands and hunting can thrive in California only when we work to ensure that regulations, policies and laws are helpful, or at the very least don't get in the way.

That's why we have an advocacy team that works at all levels of government, seeking science-based regulations and bipartisan solutions, and working hand in hand with partner conservation and hunting organizations. We can't take the future of waterfowl for granted. And we advocate for hunting, not just habitat, because hunters are the driving force for wetland conservation in California. Conservation ensures that our hunting is sustainable, and a strong population of waterfowl hunters ensures that wetland conservation continues year after year.

Hunters and waterfowl in California face constant challenges: gun regulations that run roughshod

over sportsmen and women, disincentives for landowners to provide quality habitat or pursue wildlife-friendly agriculture, attempts to seize water that's reserved for wildlife, emotion-based attacks on hunting.



While our advocacy team does truly outstanding work, challenges at the federal, state and local levels are often more than we can keep up with, which can leave us reacting, rather than advocating proactively. We need to double the size of our advocacy team to ensure California Waterfowl can rise to growing challenges, head off threats before they come our way and increase proactive legislation and policy efforts.

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## Education Goal: Reach 100,000 people

California's population will surpass 40 million people soon and is expected to continue growing at an exponential rate. Most of these people reside in urban areas far removed from wild places and are becoming more and more disconnected from nature, valuing it less and less. Some have dubbed this "nature deficit disorder" and the consequences are huge. A general lack of



understanding of wildlife management, hunting and the importance of conservation not only jeopardizes waterfowl populations, but also people and society as a whole.

To combat this trend, we're planning to more than double our outreach efforts, both in the classroom and in the field, to reach 100,000 people over the next five years.

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## Membership Goal: Grow to 30,000 members

Approximately 70,000 California duck validations are sold each year, with the vast majority going to waterfowl hunters. While our membership has grown to about 20,000 over the past few decades, we're still a far cry from reaching all active duck hunters, and one can only assume that very few non-hunters have joined our ranks.



Well, we'd like to change that, and we have to if we're to be successful. We're passionate about our work and proud of what we've accomplished and believe that if we share our conservation story with new audiences and focus on

common interests rather than our differences, our membership will grow, as will our impact.

We know that when we get the chance to share our story with non-members, they are impressed with what we do, and it's not hard to convince them they should join us. The key to growing membership, therefore, will be to

reach hunters and waterfowl aficionados who have not yet encountered us.

To do that, we must double our investments in communication, branding and marketing.

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## Fundraising Goal: Raise \$100,000,000

Success within grassroots fundraising events and the undying support of our dinner committees have built a strong financial foundation for the organization that will allow us to further develop our business in the years to come.



Where we need more work is with major donors,

corporations and foundations. We need to develop and implement a process for better communicating and documenting interactions with major and prospective donors who express interest in philanthropy, bequests and real estate planned giving. That will be key to addressing our highest priority funding needs.

In order to raise \$100,000,000 over the next five years, we will launch a comprehensive fundraising campaign in 2020 during California Waterfowl's 75th anniversary celebration.

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# California Waterfowl history

California Waterfowl was founded in 1945 as the Duck Hunters Association of California with the sole purpose of influencing hunting regulations and other government activities that affected waterfowl in California.

By the early 1980s, the challenges facing waterfowl and hunting had greatly expanded. In 1985, the CWA initiated waterfowl studies in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Game (now Fish and Wildlife) to determine factors that limited waterfowl populations in California and the Pacific Flyway.

Prior to that time, it was widely believed that conditions in northern breeding grounds influenced the population of ducks wintering in California. However, research showed clearly that 70% of mallards taken by hunters in California had been

hatched and reared in California—in other words, local breeding habitat has a huge influence on mallard

abundance during the winter.

By 1991, a decline in hunter numbers was becoming pronounced, so California Waterfowl began introducing children to hunting and the outdoors through educational outreach, a program that would later be extended to adults. Now the organization recognizes that hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation are crucial to the future of wetlands because hunters are the most motivated and passionate force for wetland conservation.

California Waterfowl began undertaking substantial habitat restoration efforts in 1998, and habitat work has come to represent the bulk of the organization's expenditures, funded largely by major public and private grants, but leveraged with membership fees. Our work focuses on both breeding

and wintering habitat.

In 2009, California Waterfowl initiated its Hunt Program, which provides private-land hunting opportunities to CWA members. Lack of access to hunting land is one of the leading causes of people giving up on hunting; CWA addresses that need by providing opportunity to 2,000 hunters each year.

California Waterfowl also became a wetland owner and manager in 2012 with the acquisition of the Grizzly Ranch and Denverton duck clubs in the Suisun Marsh, funded by donations and grants. It acquired two properties in the Tulare Basin the following year—the Badger Almond and Houchin units of Goose Lake—with similar funding mechanisms, and was given properties in the California Delta (Quimby Island) and Butte

Sink (Butte Creek Island Ranch) in 2015 and 2016, respectively. In 2018, CWA acquired the Sanborn Slough duck club adjacent

to Butte Creek Island Ranch. California Waterfowl uses these properties for wetland conservation, to offer hunting for the general public and to provide educational programs for school children and hunters.

While duck hunter numbers remain steady in California, CWA knows hunters alone cannot meet the needs of waterfowl. So it has a substantial school outreach program to ensure that all of tomorrow's leaders—whether they hunt or not—are aware of the staggering beauty and needs of the waterfowl that grace our skies and wetlands. CWA also ensures they know that hunters led the original charge to stem the loss of wetlands in California, and continue to drive conservation efforts in this state.

