

# Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644B), Cropland – Seasonal Inundation with Staggered Flood-Up

644B – Specification

May 2015

## Definition

Harvested grain fields with initial flood-up staggered over two months. The flooding is intended to provide roosting habitat for Sandhill Cranes. Staggered flood-up is the practice of gradually flooding part of an area every other week until the entire area is flooded. When a field is initially flooded, there is a pulse of available resources for some species of waterbirds as invertebrates and small mammals are pushed to the surface. Wading birds such as the state-threatened Sandhill Crane are known to concentrate their foraging activity at the water line in newly flooded, post-harvest corn, rice and safflower fields. The practice of staggering flood-up increases the amount of time that these resources are available to birds.

## Requirements

- Fields are flooded for a minimum of 60 days continuously at any time from September 15 to March 15.
- Water depth is maintained between 2-10 inches.
  - a) Eligible fields must have a minimum of 40 acres flooded at any time.
- Staggered flood-up can be implemented in two ways:
  - a) The initial flooding occurs on at least 40 continuous acres.
  - b) After 40 acres are flooded, gradually add water to the rest of the enrolled area such that about 25% of enrolled area is flooded-up every 14 days.
- Vegetation management: Prior to flooding in fall, crop is removed/harvested and the field is baled, burned, chopped, rolled, or has one pass of light tillage that leaves at least 60% residue on the surface.

## Planning considerations

- Discuss assurance of water before selecting this option.
- Consider pumping restrictions related to Threatened/Endangered fish species where applicable (Bay-Delta region).
- Priority Areas: corn fields in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta; rice/small grain fields anywhere in Sacramento Valley or Bay Delta.



## Operation and Maintenance

- Implementation of this practice will include a plan for monitoring and maintenance of structural, hydrologic, and vegetative measures.