

Delta Waterfowl Disappointed in Gov. Newsom's Veto of Wetlands Conservation Bill



AB 828 would have improved access to groundwater for managing wetland habitat in California

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA — California Gov. Gavin Newsom has vetoed a bill that would have helped waterfowl and other migratory birds, while also ensuring no net loss of wetlands in the state.

AB 828, a bill to support sustainable groundwater management and managed wetlands in California, was sent to the governor with strong bipartisan backing. The bill passed the California Senate on a 29-10 vote, and the Assembly on a 53-17 tally in late August.

“Everybody is shocked that Gov. Newsom didn’t sign the bill. It’s a positive bill for the environment, and we are disappointed he didn’t support it,” said Christopher

Hoon, manager of government affairs in the Pacific Flyway for Delta Waterfowl.

Water rights are a valuable commodity in California, and wetland managers rely on groundwater to maintain critical habitat for breeding and wintering waterfowl. AB 828 would have improved access to affordable groundwater.

“This bill would have been beneficial not only to duck hunters but to wetlands across California—especially in the Central Valley—and to waterfowl as a whole,” Hoon said. “We worked on this bill for over a year. Everyone was feeling hopeful and confident once the bill passed the legislature. All of the conservation and environmental groups supported it. We were all on the same team.”

Newsom’s unexpected veto is puzzling because his explanation offered little explanation.

“The bill was popular in the legislature,” Hoon said. “Newsom claims to be pro-environment but here’s a perfect example of a bill that would have clear-cut positive effects on wetlands and waterfowl that the governor decided to veto for no apparent reason. In our opinion, the veto message lacked any clarity about why he didn’t sign it. From our conservation coalition perspective, everyone is really taken aback by the veto and upset because it doesn’t make any sense.”

By failing to enact AB 828, wetland habitat is threatened, along with the ability to access groundwater to manage wetlands in California.

“Wetlands ecosystems across California are impacted more than any other ecosystem in our state and are essential in providing more opportunities for wildlife and migrating waterfowl,” Hoon said. “We must protect these dwindling resources and ensure their availability for wildlife and future generations of Californians.”

Delta Waterfowl is The Duck Hunters Organization, a leading conservation group working to produce ducks and secure the future of waterfowl hunting in North America. Visit deltawaterfowl.org.

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