



2026 POLICY OBJECTIVES



UNITED STATES FEDERAL POLICY

- **Work to establish \$50 million in annual investment for the conservation of the most important and most at risk wetlands in the US Prairie Pothole Region (PPR).**

WHY THIS MATTERS: The PPR is the most important area in North America for duck production, and it is the smallest wetlands that are the engine that drives the “duck factory.” A majority of these small wetlands are in agricultural fields and can be perceived by private landowners to impede their annual production. Creating a new annual program will conserve these critical and at-risk wetlands while continuing to allow agricultural use—a win/win for farmers and duck hunters.

- **Work to establish \$25 million in annual investment for post-harvest winter flooding in key wintering areas (LA, AR, MS, TX and CA)**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Providing habitat for wintering waterfowl is critical to hunter success. Not only is this habitat needed in areas where hunters will be, but having additional flooded areas for birds to forage and rest helps keep waterfowl in an area and reduces pressure.

- **Reauthorize the Legacy Restoration Fund at levels of at least \$100 million/year to ensure the National Wildlife Refuge System has adequate funding for deferred maintenance to address habitat management.**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Established through the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020, the Legacy Restoration Fund was created to address the backlog of deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs on public lands across the United States. Delta wants to ensure this fund, which was only authorized through September 2025, is reauthorized to provide the National Wildlife Refuge System with funding to address important infrastructure needs and other deferred maintenance most important to ducks and duck hunters consistent with our Restore Our Refuges Campaign.

- **Get congressional authorization to allow USFWS to engage in shared stewardship programs to provide for the utilization of private sector contractors to assist refuge managers in providing enhanced habitat on refuges**

WHY THIS MATTERS: The National Wildlife Refuge System is a massive public land system with over 18 million acres in the lower 48. The staffing capacity of the NWRS is currently far below desired levels and inadequate to appropriately address the needs to effectively manage habitat. Delta is working with Congress to authorize the US Fish and Wildlife Service to engage in shared stewardship programs, which would allow refuge managers to work with private contractors around these refuges to address the habitat needs of these areas.



- **Pass the HEN Act to provide \$3.5 million for additional hen houses in the PPR and \$3.5 million for breeding duck conservation and management in California.**

WHY THIS MATTERS: In areas where ground-nesting mallards typically experience nest success of less than 10%, Delta Hen Houses consistently boost nest success to 60% and sometimes as high as 80% or even more. Providing federal funding for hen houses and breeding duck conservation provides a larger fall flight of ducks which means more birds in the decoys.

- **Seek further expansion of hunting opportunities through the Hunt Fish Rule**

WHY THIS MATTERS: The Annual Hunt Fish Rule from the US Fish and Wildlife Service establishes the refuges or refuge units open to hunting and fishing and modifies seasons, species and methods on refuges. Delta has consistently advocated for increased access and opportunity for waterfowl hunters while supporting science-based conservation, including the implementation of an “open unless closed” policy. This would ensure incremental, increased access is provided to waterfowl hunters while also ensuring inviolate sanctuary requirements are maintained.

PACIFIC FLYWAY

CALIFORNIA

- **Assembly Bill 929 would create a four-year protection from groundwater usage limitations for wetlands.**

WHY THIS MATTERS: These protections would allow for wetland habitat managers to follow their historical usage plans, ensuring consistent and predictable habitat for breeding and wintering waterfowl.

- **Secure the future of Prop 4 funding earmarked for wetlands**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Proposition 4, passed in 2024, provided over \$800 million for conservation specifically for “fish and wildlife resources and habitats.” Over time, some have sought to repurpose these funds for other uses, and Delta has consistently worked to prevent this reappropriation of funding to ensure this money goes toward habitat enhancement and conservation.

- **Continue to oppose legislation which targets firearms used for waterfowl hunting**

WHY THIS MATTERS: In recent years, California lawmakers have introduced anti-firearm legislation which has specifically targeted waterfowl hunters, either directly or indirectly. Many of these bills have been defeated by Delta and our conservation partners.

- **Support the establishment of a new agency to conserve critical grassland habitats**

WHY THIS MATTERS: California grasslands, specifically those in and around Merced County, are some of the most critical and threatened wetlands in the Golden State. Creating a new agency to ensure their conservation is vital for waterfowl hunting and habitat throughout the state.

- **Ensure funding generated on state wildlife areas remains there to further enhance these public hunting areas**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Currently, funding generated from waterfowl hunting reservation applications and entry passes is turned over to the state's general revenue. Ensuring that funding remains on the refuges where it was generated created better funding and management options for these public lands.

OREGON

- **Ensure water deliveries continue to be made to the Klamath River from the Oregon side of the border**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Water from the Klamath River is used to supply areas like the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges. This ensures good habitat and increased public hunting opportunities in the PNW.

- **Support 1% for wildlife legislation to benefit waterfowl**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Currently, Oregon has a 1.25% transient lodging tax, typically paid by out of state visitors. House Bill 4134 would raise that tax to 2.75%, and Delta is working to ensure the increase can be used for better habitat, more consistent wetlands and increased access.

- **Continue fighting IP28**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Initiative Petition 28 supporters are currently gathering signatures for the November ballot. This initiative, if passed, would "criminalize breeding practices, injuring/killing animals, including for food, hunting, fishing." It's not often such brazen anti-hunting attacks are made, but Delta is committed to working with conservation partners to prevent this dangerous, anti-science petition from becoming law.

WASHINGTON

- **Host first lobby day in Olympia to engage members and volunteers with elected officials**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Lobby Days at state capitols allow Delta members, volunteers and staff to meet with legislators to discuss important issues related to waterfowl hunting. Through these meetings, relationships form and lawmakers know and have a better understanding of the voice and position of waterfowl hunters in their state and district.

- **Continue to oppose legislation which targets firearms used for waterfowl hunting**

WHY THIS MATTERS: In recent years, Washington lawmakers have introduced anti-firearm legislation which has specifically targeted waterfowl hunters, either directly or indirectly. Many of these bills have been defeated by Delta and our conservation partners.

UTAH

- **Establish the Goshen Bay Waterfowl Management Area**

WHY THIS MATTERS: House Bill 93 would establish the Goshen Bay Waterfowl Management Area, which would create an additional 5,000 acres for hunting around Utah Lake. This would also allow for federal and matching funds to be used for habitat and access enhancements.

- **Support water deliveries to the Great Salt Lake**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Record-low water levels in the Great Salt Lake (GSL) have caused many critical historical wetlands to run dry, creating disturbances in migratory patterns across the Pacific Flyway. House Bill 247 will direct certain tax revenues to be used to support water deliveries to the GSL, providing water to wetlands and creating quality habitat for waterfowl.

- **Support legislation to study the health of Utah wetlands**

WHY THIS MATTERS: House Bill 509 will direct the Department of Natural Resources to create a study committee to oversee the general health of Utah wetlands.

ARIZONA

- **Support hunters against encroachment on hunting areas**

WHY THIS MATTERS: As population grows and people continue to move to Arizona, homes and neighborhoods are built further away from population centers. Because of this, hunters may face increased conflict with nonhunters. Delta staff wants to ensure the rights of hunters to pursue game is protected from this increased pressure.

- **Pass a Constitutional Right to Hunt and Fish**

WHY THIS MATTERS: In a time when hunting traditions face threats, ensuring outdoorsmen and women have the constitutional right to hunt and fish is more important than ever. This legislation would ensure the preservation of hunting rights in Arizona for generations to come.

COLORADO

- **Continue to support the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and oppose ballot box biology.**

WHY THIS MATTERS: The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation has proven to be the most successful form of wildlife management in the world. This biologically sound approach is sometimes challenged by scientifically barren petition efforts, and Delta will work to oppose these efforts when they are harmful to ducks and duck hunters.





CENTRAL FLYWAY

OKLAHOMA

- **Advocate for construction to begin on water control structure on Hackberry Flat WMA**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Hackberry Flat WMA in southwest Oklahoma has faced infrastructure and deferred maintenance issues for many years. Delta's policy team has engaged the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and other partners to address these issues and determine a funding and engineering plan to help ensure the nearly 7,000-acre WMA is accessible and provides quality opportunities for hunters.

- **Provide clarity and structure to waterfowl guides and outfitters**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Far too often, hunters hear horror stories from others of waterfowl hunts with guides and outfitters who don't hold up their end of the bargain. Delta wants to protect hunters who use these services by ensuring states create structure around guiding operations to discourage fly-by-night outfitters and ensure they're following the law and general safety practices. Senate Bill 2095 addresses this concern, and Delta will monitor this legislation throughout the process.

KANSAS

- **Establish an Outdoor Stewardship Fund to better fund conservation**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Funding remains one of the main challenges of conservation agencies across the nation. Establishing a consistent, steady stream of dedicated funding allows conservation agencies to address deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs while also creating adequate and stable budgets for the future.

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MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

LOUISIANA

- Work toward a stable funding source for the Louisiana Outdoor Forever Program

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MISSISSIPPI

- Work toward a stable funding source for the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund

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TENNESSEE

- Work to establish a stable funding source for TWRA

WHY THIS MATTERS: Funding remains one of the main challenges of conservation agencies across the nation. Establishing a consistent, steady stream of dedicated funding allows conservation agencies to address deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs while also creating adequate and stable budgets for the future. Senate Bill 2183 addresses these issues.

WISCONSIN

- Establish a sandhill crane hunting season

WHY THIS MATTERS: The sandhill crane population in Wisconsin has been thriving for years, and establishing a scientifically sound hunting season is Delta's key priority this year in the Badger State. Not only are they great table fare and a blast to hunt, but the abundant population has also caused problems for Wisconsin farmers, on that hunters can help to remedy.

ATLANTIC FLYWAY

PENNSYLVANIA

- **Establish Sunday hunting for waterfowl hunters**

WHY THIS MATTERS: In 2025, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was given the authority to allow Sunday hunting throughout the commonwealth. Due to the timing of the legislation, migratory bird hunting was not included in the original package of Sunday hunting allowances because season dates had already been published. Delta staff is working with the DCNR to ensure the Sunday hunting prohibition is repealed for the 2026-27 hunting season so Pennsylvanians can have an extra day in the field.

NORTH CAROLINA

- **Continue to work with NCWRC to establish Sunday waterfowl hunting**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Like Pennsylvania, legislation was previously passed to allow the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to establish Sunday hunting. Despite this, the WRC has not allowed Sunday hunting for waterfowl. Delta staff has continually advocated on behalf of waterfowl hunters to allow them an extra day on the weekends to spend time in the blind.

MARYLAND

- **Establish Sunday waterfowl hunting**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Sunday hunting in Maryland has been prohibited for decades, which means fewer days in the field for waterfowl hunters. House Bill 1063 will repeal that prohibition for nearly all waterfowl hunting, allowing the Department of Natural Resources to create season dates with Sunday hunting.





CANADA

- **Further develop the pitch for a Shallow Wetlands Incentive Program (SWIP) in Alberta**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Recent estimates put the annual small wetlands in cropland loss rate at 0.88% in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. At this rate, more than one-third of these vulnerable small wetlands will be lost in the next 50 years. SWIP provides annual incentive payments to farmers to preserve their wetlands instead of draining them. Manitoba has seen great success with SWIP, and Delta is seeking to further expand that into Alberta to protect these critical breeding grounds.

- **Ongoing efforts to find provincial funding for SWIP in Alberta**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Delta is working with partners to find funding and begin an initial phase of SWIP programming in the parkland region of Alberta.

- **Stay engaged with Manitoba SWIP and GROW programs**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Manitoba was the proving grounds for SWIP, and the success has been undeniable. Delta policy staff will continue to work with these programs to help provide guidance as they continue to expand in the province. More details can be found here: <https://deltawaterfowl.org/whats-new/news/manitoba-s-shallow-wetlands-incentive-program-a-success-for-ducks-and-farmers/>

- **Expand late Canada Goose season in Ontario's southern WMUs**

WHY THIS MATTERS: This change will reinstate a highly desired hunting opportunity in parts of the southern district that were lost with the introduction of Sunday gun hunting. Subsequently, this change will remove a barrier to implementing Sunday gun hunting in the remaining municipalities in southern Ontario, where goose hunters were reluctant to give up their late goose season for the additional day.

- **Establish Tundra Swan and Mourning Dove seasons in Prairie Provinces**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Population estimates have shown healthy and productive tundra swan and mourning dove populations in the prairie provinces and having the opportunity to harvest these birds is a priority for Delta. The policy staff have been leading on these issues for years and hope to see that come to fruition soon.

- **Establish sandhill crane seasons in NWT, NU, ON & QC**

WHY THIS MATTERS: The sandhill crane population in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario and Quebec has been thriving, and hunters are anxious to get in the field to pursue these birds. Delta has long advocated for a sandhill crane season and welcomes any move by the CWS to open a hunt.

- **Move Canada Goose season to close concurrently with duck season in Nova Scotia Zone 2**

WHY THIS MATTERS: Delta supports the delay of the start of the general Canada goose season in Nova Scotia Zone 2 to allow for closure which would align with the end of duck season. Policy staff will continue to advocate for a Jan. 31 closure for both seasons in Zone 2, but this modification would be welcomed.

- **Seek expansion of the Hunter Apprentice License program to other provinces**

WHY THIS MATTERS: This initiative is one of the most under-utilized hunter recruitment tools being used in Canada. It simplifies the process for new potential hunters by providing an opportunity to “try before you buy”, waiving hunter education and firearms course requirements. Available in BC and Quebec, and virtually in every state, this opportunity will greatly enhance our ability to attract and recruit new hunters.

- **Work to provide clarity and structure to waterfowl guides and outfitters in Ontario**

WHY THIS MATTERS: The absence of any regulations or protocols for guides and outfitters continues to be one of the most received complaints Delta staff hear each year. Unlike other provinces, Ontario currently does not have any structure in place to monitor, regulate or enforce the guiding and outfitting sector. This has led to increased hunting pressure, increased access issues and an increase in illegitimate outfitting practices. Delta wants to protect hunters who use legitimate services by ensuring Ontario creates structure around guiding operations to ensure they're following the law and general safety practices. One of the important outcomes from this effort will be to lessen overall hunting pressure and access issues for hunters and to establish a recognized platform for outfitting operations in Ontario.

