



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

helping people help the land

## Lafter Farms

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- *Nick Gallagher*

*Woodland Service Center*

For some farmers, a poorly draining corner of cropland could appear a troublesome issue, which is not surmountable. For others, like Tony and Russell Lucchesi, of Lafter Farms, it presents an opportunity to turn that small slice of acreage



*Native grasses and shrubs were planted around the wetland area.*

into something really special and important. The Lucchesis had a discussion with their parents, the property owners, about converting the section into a wetland, to benefit waterfowl and other wildlife, and in the process eliminate their concerns about water runoff and standing water on their property.

The Lucchesis met with Nick Gallagher and Ha Truong at NRCS’s field office in Woodland, Calif., to discuss cost-share opportunities to create a private wetland. Through NRCS’s Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), NRCS provided \$65,000 for the 10-acre wetland construction, including installing a quarter mile of canal bank set back, native grasses and shrubs, and a screw gate and flashboard riser to allow water to circulate between the nearby slew and the wetland. Nick Gallagher, a rangeland management specialist, worked with the Lucchesis to submit their contract through the Biologists Tim Viel and Tom Moore, for screening and ranking, and Ha Truong, an engineer, drew up the design plans for approval.

“I met with the landowners about their vision, and wanted to make sure my design met both their needs and NRCS’s conservation requirements,” said Truong. “We all had a really good feeling about the project and were all really excited to get it done quickly.

The project only took 11 months from the group’s first discussion through job completion. NRCS’s partner, the Yolo County Resource Conservation District, assisted in obtaining the necessary construction permits, and WHIP funding was available to cost share on the project.



### Design Considerations for the Wetland Included:

- a screwgate and flashboard riser to transfer water between the wetland and adjacent slew
- a quarter mile of canal bank set back to prevent erosion
- native grasses and shrubs to encourage native species
- varying water depths to encourage diverse species

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The project took mostly unproductive and wet acreage out of production, but the benefits are limitless. The wetland eliminates flooding conditions and bank erosion and in turn improves local water

quality and provides a healthy habitat for waterfowl, hawks and raptors. Furthermore, native pollinators, including ground-nesting bees, have a safe and productive habitat to reproduce, a critical issue in California.

“We have been very pleased with the outcome of the project. It will be an area of the ranch that our families will enjoy for years to come,” said Russell Lucchesi.



Left: The corner section, which had poor drainage and was highly unproductive, before wetland construction began.

Below: After the corner section of their farmland was converted into a wetland, the Lucchesis have enjoyed watching the abundance of waterfowl and other wildlife make their property a safe and healthy habitat.

