Land of the West Wind

Feb 2026 Volume 26 Issue I

Russian Thistle: A Growing Problem in Suisun Marsh

By: Tim Edmunds (SRCD)

Figure 1. Seasonal wetlands in Suisun Marsh are increasingly dominated by Russian thistle (*Salsola* spp.), a fast-spreading invasive plant that alters habitat structure, reduces open water and native vegetation, and complicates wetland management efforts that support waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife.

Battling invasive plant species and nuisance weeds is a challenge familiar to everyone in Suisun Marsh. For years, *Lepidium*, cocklebur, aster, and especially *Phragmites* have required ongoing and diligent management. While these plants remain problematic in certain areas of the Marsh, a new invasive species has emerged over the last few years as a significant concern. Russian thistle has quickly become a growing problem in Suisun Marsh, affecting both habitat quality and wetland operations.

What is Russian thistle and where is it found?

Russian thistle (*Salsola* spp.) is a tumbleweed that has become increasingly common in Suisun Marsh (Figure 1). It is a fast-growing annual plant with a deep taproot and a high capacity for seed production. Plants typically flower in late summer to early fall, produce fully developed, viable seeds (embryonic plants in protected pods) by fall, and then die back (senesce). As the plant senesces, the main stems break off at the ground level, spreading as many as 200,000 seeds as the plant tumbles with the wind or moves through water. The cycle then repeats the following season.

Figure 2. Dense accumulations of Russian thistle tumbleweeds have clogged this managed wetland ditch, restricting water circulation and preventing boat access to duck blinds.

Seedlings are most often first observed along pond edges and levees, but germination can also occur on pond bottoms as water levels drop. Russian thistle is commonly found in vernal pools, swamps, mudflats, and salt marshes, and can form dense stands in both disturbed areas, such as dredge soil placement sites and levees, and in otherwise undisturbed

[*Russian thistle,* Cont. on Pg. 4]

Land of the West Wind

Quarterly Newsletter
Suisun Resource Conservation District
2544 Grizzly Island Road
Suisun, CA 94585

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SRCD's Board Meetings are on the second Wednesday of each month at 2PM at the Solano County Supervisors Chambers: 675 Texas Street Fairfield, CA 94533

SRCD represents private landowners of the Suisun Marsh at the Federal, State, and local levels. It's historic goal has been to achieve a water supply of adequate quality so that preferred wetland habitat values will be retained through appropriate management practices. With cooperation from landowners and various agencies, SRCD develops new programs aimed at protecting and improving the Suisun Marsh for future generations.

Comings and Goings at the Suisun Resource Conservation District

Welcome New SRCD Board Director ~ John Eudy

The Suisun Resource Conservation District (SRCD) is pleased to welcome John Eudy as the newest member of the SRCD Board of Directors. John has served as an SRCD Associate Director for the past two years and has assumed the position of Chair of the SRCD Legal Subcommittee.

John began hunting in his late 20's and has been a long-time active member at Wheeler Island Duck Club in Suisun Marsh, where he served as President for more than 12 years. In addition to his work in the Marsh, John owns a ranch in Angels Camp, where he has developed wood duck habitat projects and supports waterfowl conservation efforts in partnership with California Waterfowl Association (CWA). In recognition of his commitment to conservation and education, CWA presented John with the 2024 Ken Hofmann Award for his exceptional efforts in promoting and supporting youth programs that educate and inspire future hunter-conservationists.

John also serves on the Calaveras County Fish and Game Commission, working to enhance both fishing and hunting experiences in Calaveras County. Over the past decade, he has helped sponsor an annual youth fishing clinic to encourage outdoor recreation for children and their families. His commitment to outreach reflects a strong interest in preserving outdoor traditions and natural resource stewardship for future generations.

Professionally, John retired in 2025 after more than 40 years with Essex Property Trust working in senior real estate development and investment leadership roles. These days, John is an agricultural producer, cultivating olives and grapes on his ranch. His Dogtown Olive Oil earned a Best in Class award at the 2023 California Olive Oil Competition, and he produces a Petite Sirah wine that honors the wood duck habitat on his property.

When he's not working on conservation projects or ranch operations, John can often be found in the Marsh with his dog Tule, as shown in the accompanying photo. SRCD is excited to welcome John's leadership and perspective to the Board and looks forward to his guidance and support in advancing SRCD's conservation mission.

Please join us in welcoming John Eudy to the SRCD Board of Directors.

Diversion Reporting Update

Diversion reports for the 2025 water year **were due January 31st, 2026, but there is a 30-day grace period** after this date to still submit your diversions on time if you have not done so already.

CalWATRS—California Water Accounting, Tracking, and Reporting System

CalWATRS is the State's new water rights data system, replacing the legacy eWRIMS platform. With CalWATRS, water right holders now have a streamlined way to view all their water right records, file annual reports, and request water rights services.

Reporting Must Be Completed in CalWATRS

eWRIMS User IDs and Passwords Do Not Work in CalWATRS

Beginning this year, annual reports must be filed through CalWATRS. The previous platform, eWRIMS, is closed. CalWATRS accounts require new usernames and passwords. Your eWRIMS username and password will not work in CalWATRS.

PINs Have Been Mailed

To access your water right records in CalWATRS, you need a personal identification number (PIN). The State Water Board mailed PINs to primary owners and agents of water rights in October and November 2025. If you have not received a letter, please email your SRCD Water Manager so that they can work with you and the Water Board to recover your PIN.

For Businesses or Government Agencies

If you are part of a business or government agency, you can create an "Organization" within CalWATRS. This feature allows multiple staff or representatives to create their own accounts that can access and manage the organization's water rights.

Issues Setting Up Your Account and Reporting?

SRCD staff has been working directly with landowners and the State Water Resources Control Board to help landowners transition to the State's new reporting website. It was expected that with the rollout of the new system, there would be some bumps in the road. SRCD is committed to helping folks in the marsh navigate this unfamiliar process. Please, don't hesitate to reach out to your SRCD Water Manager for any assistance.

CALIFORNIA Water Boards
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS

Future Water Reporting Years —

Delta Watermaster Office

To submit the 2025 water use reports, please visit California Water Board website and their California Water Accounting, Tracking, and Reporting System (CalWATRS).

Contact Information below:

CalWATRS login page	https://calwatrs.waterboards.ca.gov/portal/s/
Water Use Reporting Help website	https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_diversion_reporting/
If you need help logging in: Email: CalWATRS-help@waterboards.ca.gov Call: (916) 341-5333	If you need help submitting reports, please call your water manager: SRCD Office number: (707) 425-9302

[*Russian thistle,* Cont. from Pg. 1]

marsh habitat. It can take over both high ground and low spots within ponds, outcompeting beneficial native plant species and creating thick, spiny ground cover that is difficult to move through. Dense growth can also clog ditches, restrict water flow, and prevent boat access to duck blinds (Figure 2).

Because of its life cycle and rapid seed dispersal, timing is critical for effective control (Figure 3). Management actions taken before seed development can significantly reduce spread, while treatments applied after seed development may unintentionally contribute to further dispersal.

What are some of the options for control of Russian thistle?

Controlling Russian thistle can be challenging due to its high seed production and ability to spread easily. Effective management requires an integrated approach that combines chemical, mechanical, and water management strategies (Figure 4).

Chemical Control

A variety of herbicides can be effective for controlling Russian thistle, depending on when they are applied. Some products work best before plants emerge (pre-emergent), while others are designed for use after plants have sprouted (post-emergent). Guidance on effective herbicide options, application rates, and timing is provided in the UC Davis weed management guidelines (DiTomaso et al., 2013). Products such as Garlon 3A (post-emergent) and Telar XP (pre- and post-emergent) have been reported to be effective, and tank mixes of these products have shown good results in some situations. Glyphosate can also be effective but is non-selective and will kill all vegetation.

For best results, chemical treatments should be applied early in the growing season, before plants develop a waxy leaf surface that reduces herbicide effectiveness. Always follow label instructions and applicable permits when applying herbicides in wetland environments.

Mechanical Control

Hand-pulling, mowing, and disking are commonly used mechanical control methods, but timing is critical. These approaches work best when plants are removed before they set seed, since disturbing Russian thistle after seed development can quickly spread viable seeds. Small infestations can often be managed by hand-pulling plants

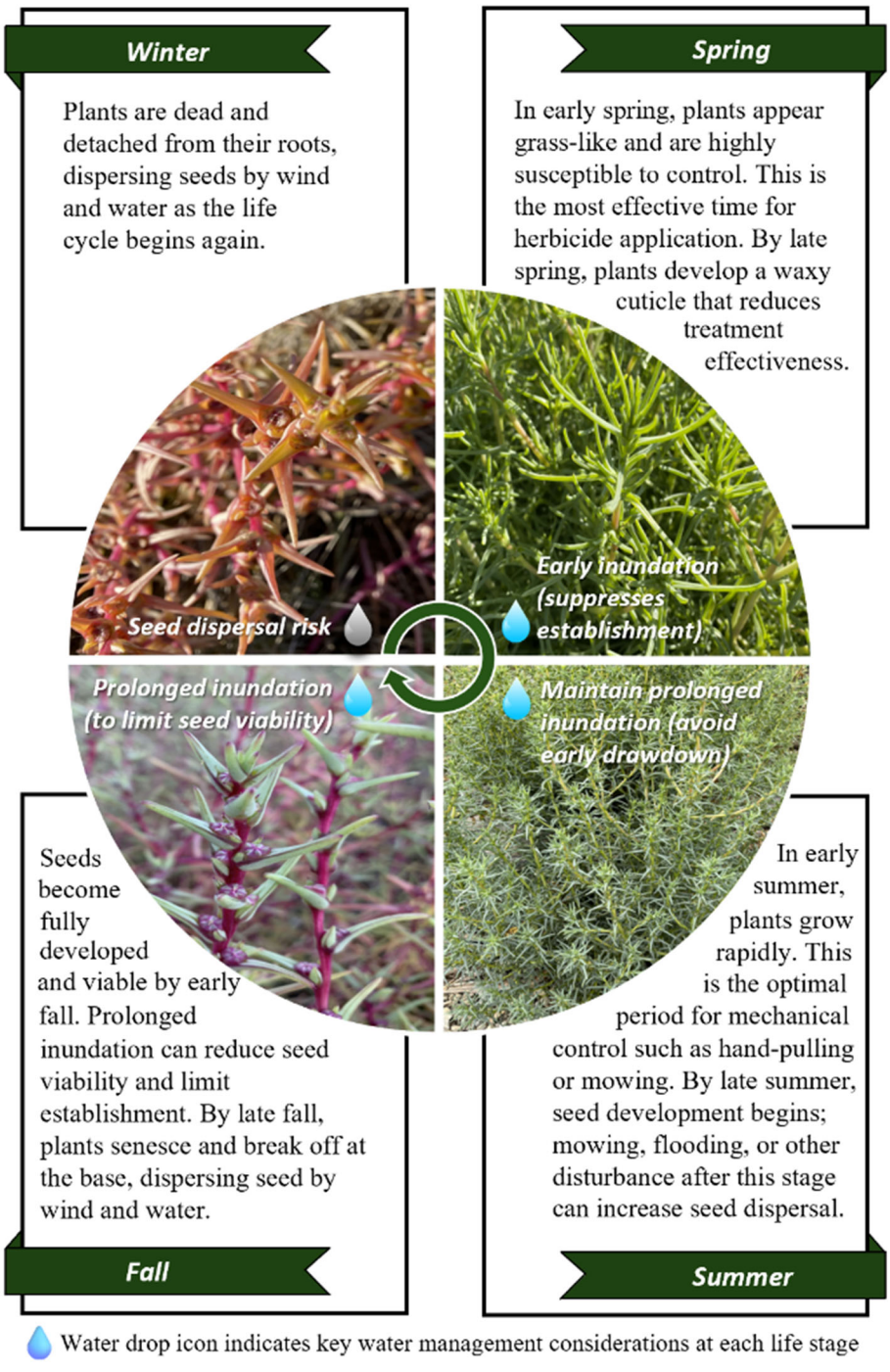


Figure 3. Seasonal life cycle of Russian thistle showing plant growth stages and associated management considerations across seasons. Effective control depends on timing, with early intervention critical to preventing seed development and dispersal.

[*Russian thistle,* Cont. on Pg. 5]

[*Russian thistle,* Cont. from Pg. 4]

just below the soil surface before seeds fully develop early in the season.

Mowing can help in some situations, but it must be done at the right time. Mowing older plants can cause them to grow low and spread, so repeated mowing before flowering and seed formation is key. Mowing just before flowering has been effective in some cases; however, mowing after seeds have fully developed–typically from late August through fall–can make infestations worse by dispersing seeds.

Disking can be effective for controlling both seedlings and larger plants, but it usually requires repeated treatments over multiple seasons to exhaust the short-lived soil seed bank, which can persist for up to three years. Because disking increases soil disturbance, it can also encourage new Russian thistle growth if used alone. For best results, disking should be carefully timed and combined with other control methods and water management strategies.

Water Management

Russian thistle tends to do well in moist soils but does not tolerate long periods of deep inundation. Because of this, water management can be an effective control tool, and extended hydroperiods have helped reduce infestations in some areas, particularly when implemented before seed development. For the best results, water management should be used alongside mechanical and chemical control methods to slow the spread of this fast-moving invader.

Conclusion

Like other invasive species in the Marsh, managing Russian thistle will require ongoing effort. However, with consistent, coordinated management and careful attention to timing, its impacts can be reduced and controlled over time.

Citation: DiTomaso, J.M., G.B. Kyser, et al. 2013. *Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States.* Weed Research and Information Center, University of California. 544 pp.

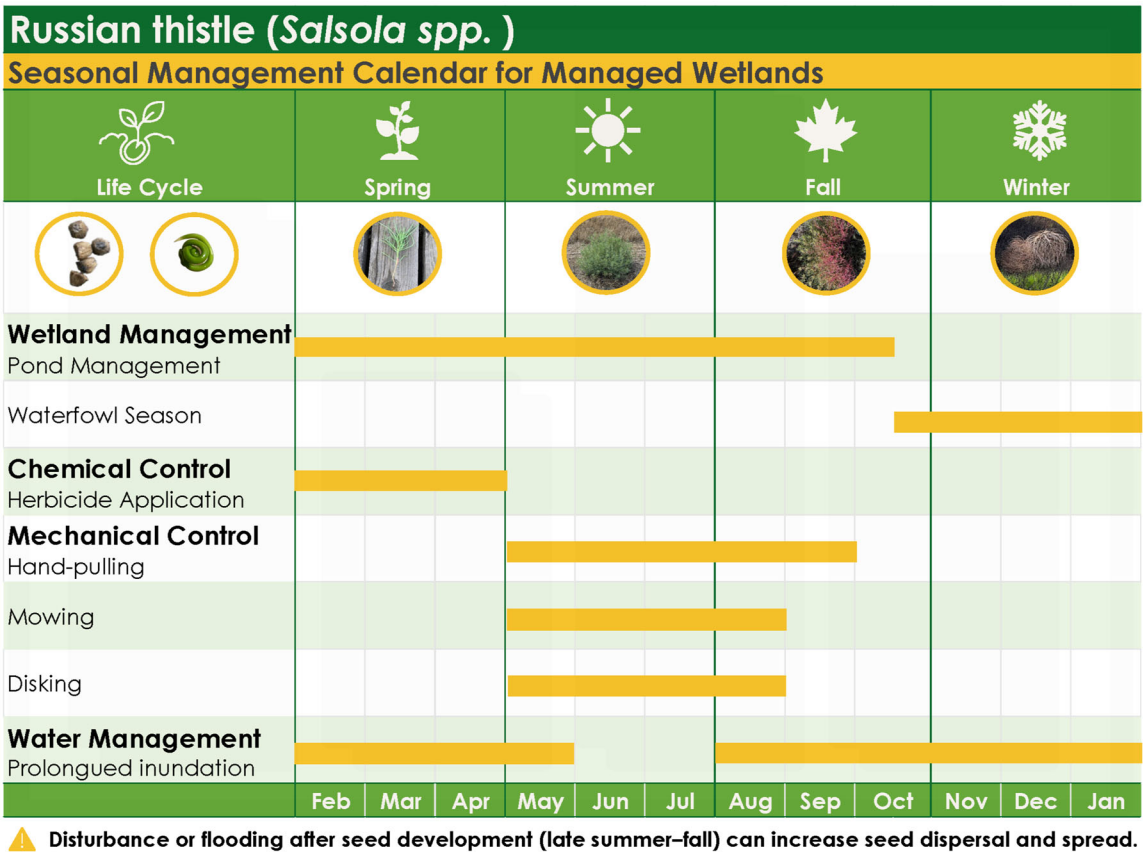


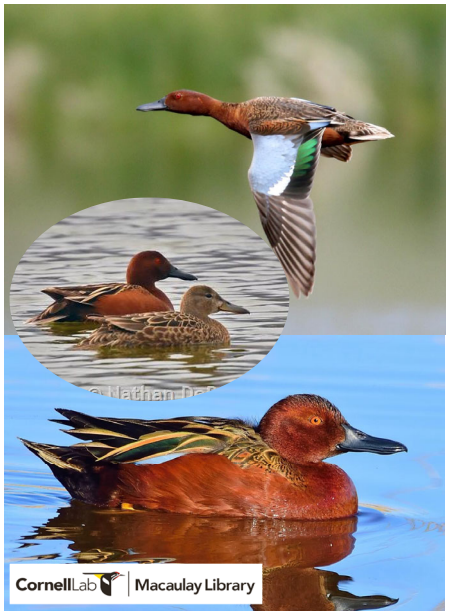
Figure 4. Seasonal management calendar for Russian thistle in managed wetlands, showing approximate wetland management seasons, plant life stages, and recommended timing for chemical, mechanical, and water-based control actions. Effective control depends on early intervention before seed development.

GIWA & Joice Island
2025—26 Waterfowl Season Stats

- For the 2025-2026 waterfowl season, Grizzly Island Wildlife Area (GIWA) welcomed 4,568 hunters who harvested 7,322 ducks and 234 geese. The average was 1.65 birds per hunter.
- The top five species at GIWA were Green-winged Teal (1,799), American Wigeon (1,779), Northern Shoveler (1,676), Mallard (558), and Northern Pintail (461).
- Grizzly Island Wildlife Area's pheasant season harvested 55 ring-neck pheasants, 32 wild and 23 planted.
- Joice Island welcomed 61 hunters who harvested 203 ducks and 5 geese. The average was 3.41 birds per hunter.
- The top five species at Joice Island were Green Winged Teal (69), Mallard (39), American Wigeon (30), Northern Shoveler (25), and Cinnamon Teal (17).
- Joice Island Wild Pigs Hunts are currently open online for applications through our online licensing website. The season will run March through May with 53 opportunities. Last season, 53 hunters successfully harvested 19 wild pigs.

The 2026 Events Ahead

Ridgeway's Rail Restrictions:	Feb 1—Aug 31
Chinook Salmon Gate Restrictions:	Feb 21—Mar 31
Spring Burning Period:	Mar 1—Apr 15
DU NAWCA Proposals DUE:	Mar 6
Lepidium Control Order Deadline:	Mar 30
Delta Smelt Gate Restriction:	Apr 1—May 31
PAI Applications DUE:	Apr 10
Spring Landowner Workshop:	Apr 22
Dredging Application Deadline:	Apr 30
Phragmites Control Order Deadline:	May 29
California Waterfowl's Marsh Day:	June 6
Suisun Conservation Fun Shoot:	July 31
Fall Landowner Workshop:	Sep 16



Cinnamon Teal ~ *Spatula cyanoptera*

- Breeding male Cinnamon teal stand out with their rich reddish-brown head and body, red eyes, and a long bill, while females and juveniles are mottled brown for camouflage and resemble blue-winged teal.
- They are dabbling ducks that forage by tipping forward in shallow water, feeding on seeds from plants such as alkali bulrush, as well as aquatic insects and zooplankton.
- Their presence is often an indicator of high-quality, shallow wetland habitat, particularly wetlands with fresh to mildly brackish wetlands with emergent vegetation and abundant aquatic invertebrates.
- Females build well-concealed nests in dense vegetation, often in upland areas close to wetlands, to protect their eggs.
- **Suisun Marsh Fun Fact:** Cinnamon teal are one of the few duck species that regularly breed in Suisun Marsh, making the marsh an important year-round habitat and not just a winter stopover.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NAWCA (North American Waterfowl Conservation Act) Grant

Up to $3 Million for Suisun Marsh Habitat Projects

Grant funding opportunity to improve waterfowl habitat
through wetland restoration and enhancement projects

Who's eligible?
Privately managed wetlands within SRCD boundaries. Cost-share required. Projects must comply with **USACE RGP 3** and include a **30-year maintenance agreement.**

Mar 6, 2026

2028-2029

DU PROPOSAL PROCESS & MORE INFO

SUISUNRCD.ORG

Questions or help: DU (916) 494-3293 | SRCD (707) 425-9302

Submission does not guarantee funding.

Plan Ahead: 2026—2027 Proposed Changes to Waterfowl Hunting Season

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is proposing updates to waterfowl hunting regulations for the 2026–2027 season. These recommendations must fall within federal frameworks set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Pacific Flyway. The proposed changes aim to maintain hunting opportunity while responding to population trends and management objectives.

Key Proposed Changes Affecting Suisun Marsh (Balance of State Zone):

Duck Season Length and Timing

- Proposed **100-day duck season** for the Balance of State zone.
- Tentative opening: **Fourth Saturday in October (Oct. 24, 2026)**
- Tentative closing: **January 31, 2027**

Special Hunt Weekends (No Changes Proposed)

- **Veterans Hunt Weekend:** February 6–7, 2027 (for Balance of State).
- **Youth Hunt Weekend:** February 13–14, 2027 (for Balance of State).

What to Expect Next

- **February 2026:** CDFW will present updated recommendations to the Fish and Game Commission.
- **April 2026:** Final regulations for the 2026–2027 season are expected to be adopted.

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2544 Grizzly Island Road
Suisun CA 94585

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2026 Intake Gate Restrictions

A friendly reminder to all landowners of the 2026 Spring Run Chinook Salmon intake gate restrictions. From February 21st through March 31st, landowners are prohibited from diverting any unscreened water from the designated sloughs (see table and map below). The purpose of these restrictions is to protect migrating salmon and meet the conditions outlined in the Army Corps of Engineers Regional General Permit 3, which permits landowners in the marsh to conduct routine maintenance activities throughout the year.

While the diversion restrictions are in place, the Suisun Resource Conservation District and the Department of Fish and Wildlife shall monitor gate closures, notify landowners, and take appropriate action on such gates in compliance with the USFW and NMFS Biological Opinion. If an open gate is observed, they shall immediately contact the landowner.

To see if your club is within the restricted diversion area, a full list of clubs affected can be found in the 2026 Spring Salmon Letter located on the SRCD website under the "Permits" tab titled "Permit Restrictions". Link below.
https://suisunrcd.org/wp-content/uploads/Permits/2026/2026-Spring-Salmon-Diversion-Restriction-Letter.pdf

If there are any questions regarding these restrictions, contact Steve Chappell (SRCD) at (707) 425-9302.

Areas of Critical Salmon Habitat
Montezuma Slough
Lower Nurse Slough (From the confluence with Denverton Slough to Montezuma Slough)
Denverton Slough
Cutoff Slough including: Spring Branch Slough and 1st and 2nd Mallard Branch Sloughs
Suisun Slough (From downstream of confluence with Boynton Slough to Grizzly Bay
Chipps Island