

## Conservation-minded farmers

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The Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (NBHCP) has given rice production special status because of its ability to promote habitat values for one or more of the NBHCP's "Covered Species." This is particularly true for the Giant Garter Snake, one of the NBHCP's "primary" Covered Species.

In order for rice farming to qualify as mitigation for the Covered Species, it is important that it be managed in a manner that promotes habitat values. The Conservancy regularly advises inquirers that the farmers it has selected to help implement the NBHCP are "conservation minded" farmers. This is a critical distinction.

Among the points we mention in terms of this differentiation are the following:

Conservancy farm tenants:

1. Pesticide use restrictions. Agree in the terms of the lease with the Conservancy to be subject to certain pesticide prohibitions if Conservancy deems any pesticide is not consistent with NBHCP's goals and objectives.
2. Pesticide use minimization. Strategize with Conservancy staff on ways to use less pesticide (esp. impacting prey species).
3. Promote habitat values enhancement. Take steps to not "clean farm" checks and levees unless there is a threat to the agronomic viability (examples include rice water weevil control).
4. Contribute ideas to successful NBHCP implementation. Periodically contact Conservancy staff with suggestions and recommendations on how to promote effective implementation of the NBHCP.
5. Comply with fallowing restrictions. Awareness of and compliance with the NBHCP's mandatory 10 percent fallow requirement (required by NBHCP but applied across all acres).
6. Covered Species awareness. Notify Conservancy in the event of significant NBHCP Covered Species sighting, especially Giant Garter Snake mortality incidents.
7. Non-native plant identification and control. Help the Conservancy comply with NBHCP's and BEMP's non-native and noxious weed control requirements by self-identification and reporting to the Conservancy, responding to the BEMP team reports and treating as needed and requested.