

## Central Valley rice grower wins Leopold Conservation Award

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- **Cited for providing waterfowl habitat and more**
- **‘Al Montna’s commitment ... is truly inspiring’**

Al Montna, a rice farmer from Yuba City, has been named the 2010 recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award in California by the Sand County Foundation, the California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation.

The \$10,000 Leopold Conservation Award is named in honor of conservationist Aldo Leopold. The award is presented annually in eight states to private landowners who practice exemplary land stewardship and management.

“Al Montna’s commitment to the health of the land, water, and wildlife that are in his care is truly inspiring, and his leadership within California’s agricultural community helps ensure that his dedication to conservation will endure, especially in future generations of farmers and ranchers,” says Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation president.

Mr. Montna operates Montna Farms, which consists of more than 2,500 acres of specialty short grain rice in Sutter County. For more than 35 years, he has flooded his rice fields, providing habitat for waterfowl. He also monitors the quantity and quality of water on his farm and utilizes laser leveling of his fields, which results in lower herbicide costs due to better water management.

In 2008, Mr. Montna built a solar power facility to offset energy usage at Montna Farms Rice Dryer. He helped pioneer the practice of knocking rice stubble down into flooded fields, rather than burning it, which creates winter habitat for many wildlife species. This process also allowed Montna Farms to bank and sell emission reduction credits for added revenue.

His desire to see his land remain in agriculture for future generations led him to place approximately 2,000 acres into California’s first wildlife-friendly agriculture easement, which provides habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds for migration, wintering or breeding.

Along with Mr. Montna, the 2010 Leopold Conservation Award had two other finalists: Bill and Kay Burrows – Red Bluff, Tehama County, and, Tim Koopmann – Sunol, Alameda County.

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