
PROCESS SUMMARY

PERSPECTIVE

This report summarizes Phase I of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, a three-phase effort to develop a long-term solution to problems affecting the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta estuary (the Bay-Delta) in Northern California.

Four general categories of critical problems facing the Bay-Delta are defined -- ecosystem quality, water quality, water supply reliability, and system vulnerability -- along with 10 draft alternative solutions to these problems.

These draft alternatives represent combinations of actions that to varying degrees address each of the problems in the Bay-Delta's four critical areas. None are final products; all are subject to significant change based on further public input and technical analysis.

Moreover, these alternatives represent concepts, not project-level proposals. They focus on identifying a range of balanced actions that might be undertaken to address Bay-Delta problems -- not when, where, and how specific actions should be taken to address these problems.

Both the problems and draft solutions have been identified in the Program's first phase, to be completed in late spring or summer of 1996. By the end of Phase I the 10 alternatives discussed here will have been refined to three to five. Phase II investigations will lead to identification of one preferred alternative. In Phase III, project-level environmental documents will be prepared. Phase III will begin in mid-1998 and continue in a staged fashion over several years.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a joint effort among state and federal agencies with management and regulatory responsibilities in the Bay-Delta, and involves significant public and "stakeholder" involvement. The Program seeks resolution of Bay-Delta problems by building consensus rather than fostering conflict.

The 10 alternatives described in this document continue to change and evolve on almost a daily basis in response to input from the Bay Delta Advisory Council (BDAC) and CALFED agencies. As a result, the alternatives in this document differ somewhat from those presented in the April, 1996 Phase I Progress Report.

The basic structure and components of the alternatives will remain the same, however, and any differences will be thoroughly explained and discussed at CALFED public events in April and beyond. Notably, the Program will not begin refining these 10 alternatives to reach the "short list" of three to five until after receiving significant public input. The Program welcomes questions regarding this refinement process. Program staff may be reached by telephone at 916/657-2666.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Bay-Delta is the largest estuary on the West Coast, a beautiful, lush, and varied ecosystem including a maze of tributaries, sloughs, and islands encompassing approximately 700 square miles. Lying at the confluence of California's two largest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin, it is a haven for plants and wildlife, including 70,000 acres of wetlands and supporting 120 fish species.

In addition to its ecological importance, the Bay-Delta is critical to California's economy, supplying drinking water for two-thirds of Californians and irrigation water for 200 crops, including 45 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables.

Given this importance, the area has for decades been the focus of competing interests -- economic and ecological, urban and agricultural. And, it has suffered from this. Numerous efforts have been made to address Bay-Delta problems. But the issues are complex and interrelated, and many continue unresolved.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program has two fundamental organizational characteristics that distinguish it from other government programs.

First, it is a cooperative, interagency effort involving a number of state and federal agencies with management and regulatory responsibilities in the Bay-Delta. A Program Coordination Team (PCT) made up of individuals from each participating agency provides liaison between the Bay-Delta Program and policy and technical experts within these agencies. The PCT provides direction in Program design and activities, and acts to ensure that Program decisions and direction are consistent with the goals and objectives of the participating agencies.

Second, it is a collaborative effort with Bay-Delta "stakeholders" -- urban and agricultural water users, fishing interests, environmental organizations, businesses, and others -- who contribute to Program design and to the problem-solving/decision-making process. Public participation and input have been essential throughout the process to date, and have come

principally through the BDAC and public participation in workshops and meetings. The BDAC is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and includes representatives of stakeholder groups appointed by the administration of California Governor Pete Wilson, and Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Program is managed by CALFED staff, with assistance from consulting organizations, and is structured in three-phases. Phase I began in May 1995, and is the subject of this report.

Phase II is a programmatic environmental review, reconnaissance-level analysis, and pre-feasibility-level planning effort to identify one preferred solution alternative. Programmatic environmental reviews focus on broad policy and resource allocation decisions required to implement a program, and are designed to inform decision makers about the interrelated and cumulative consequences of the alternatives. Reconnaissance-level analysis and pre-feasibility-level planning focus on further refinement of alternatives. Foundational work for Phase II began in January 1996. However, the majority of this effort will begin in June 1996 and conclude in June 1998.

Phase III will include site-specific environmental review of individual components of the preferred alternative selected at the conclusion of Phase II. Implementation of elements of this alternative could begin by July 1998 and will continue in a staged fashion over several years.

Other efforts are under way outside the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to address some of the problems and solutions being explored by the Program, particularly in upstream areas. Opportunities to aid or draw from these separate efforts have been and will continue to be assessed.

PHASE I GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Phase I will identify a short list of three to five alternative solutions to Bay-Delta problems that will undergo assessment in Phase II of the Program. The 10 alternatives presented and discussed in this report represent an interim step in this refinement process.

Initial focus in Phase I was to define Bay-Delta problems and Program objectives, and to identify actions that could be taken to resolve these problems and meet these objectives. In addition, strategies were developed to identify, assemble, and refine the alternatives.

A six-step process was used to accomplish these goals, and Program workshops were convened or are planned to gather public comment at each step. Workshop 1 was held in August 1995 and focused on problem identification; workshop 2 was held in September 1995 and focused on defining Program objectives; workshop 3 was held in October 1995 to identify actions to resolve problems and meet objectives; workshop 4 focused on developing solution

strategies and was held in December 1995; and workshop 5 was held in February 1996 to assess initial draft alternatives. Workshop 6, scheduled for April 1996, will focus on refining the 10 alternatives described in this report.

The Program's mission statement reads:

The mission of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta System.

The sections of the briefing packet that follow convey Solution Principles -- fundamental guides for evaluation alternative solutions -- and a summary of Core Actions.