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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO
MCGEORGE SCHOOL OF LAW,
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

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TO: CALFED Bay Delta Program Staff
FROM: Eugenia Laychak 
SUBJECT: Key Outcomes From July 29, 1996 CALFED Public Meeting

The purpose of this memo is to identify key discussion points and comments from the CALFED Public Meeting held earlier this week. This memo incorporates observations from both Scott McCreary and myself.

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ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Seventy-two people attended the meeting, including three BDAC members (Mike Madigan, Roberta Borgonovo and Alex Hildebrand), but, only eight people found the need to comment. The speakers represented central valley agriculture, water, environmental and fishing organizations, BDAC, and Delta water interests -- stakeholder groups who represent a broad range of interests and have actively participated in CALFED workshops and meetings. None represented constituencies which BDAC identified as needing more attention.

Each of the CALFED agencies were represented, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers. Resources Secretary Doug Wheeler and EPA Assistant Administrator Robert Perciasepe introduced the CALFED Program, stressing the high level of cooperative work and the importance of the Program to California's environment and economy. None of the other CALFED agency representatives expressed opinions about the CALFED process.

Most speakers raised issues which have been heard and considered by the CALFED Program. It is fair to conclude, based on Workshop 7, the July 10 BDAC meeting and July 29 public meeting that most stakeholders support proceeding into Phase II with the three preliminary draft alternatives. Many Phase II clarifications and issues were clearly and concisely outlined in Lester's presentation preceding the comment period. The following paragraphs summarize key issues of support and concern expressed by the public meeting speakers.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

BDAC Comments. Chairman Mike Madigan articulated very well BDAC's advice, including its compliments of the Program and issues of concern. There were no questions to Mr. Madigan by the CALFED panel, nor any specific follow-up commentary from BDAC members who were present.

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Compliments to the Program. Several representatives expressed support for the CALFED process. Comments were peppered with compliments to the staff, direction of the Program, and the high level of rapid response to comments.

Agricultural Community Continuing Concerns. Central Valley agricultural community representatives expressed concern that the Program "is laced with schemes to transfer water and land away from agriculture". It was pointed out that temporary land fallowing during droughts can have a permanent adverse affect on the agriculture economy, due to loss of national and international markets. Representatives also stressed that more attention should be paid to San Joaquin valley drainage issues.

Levee Stability. Conflicting views regarding Delta levees surfaced at the meeting. One speaker representing Delta interests was concerned about proposals to flood Delta islands, because many islands likely to be targeted have not been subject to tidal action. An environmental representative expressed displeasure with proposals to leave the existing levee system generally in-tact. He suggested scheduling technical workshops to deal with levees and their high level of vulnerability to earthquakes.

Range of Alternatives. Agricultural and environmental interests questioned whether the range of alternatives was sufficiently broad to address their respective concerns. A request was made to reconsider the Natural Heritage Institute alternative and to ensure that the proposed range of alternatives is appropriate to facilitate implementation of the Program. Concern was raised over the isolated facility taking water away from the Delta and undermining the concept of the Common Pool. The through-Delta alternative was considered a poor solution and it was suggested the isolated conveyance option be re-located to the east to serve the foothills and avoid seismic and flood problems.

Environmental Water Sources. Environmental interests advocated that potential new water sources not only include new storage, but also include non-structural options including water banking, conjunctive use and changes in water rights. This issue was also raised at the July 19 BDAC meeting.

Environmental and Ecosystem Restoration Concerns. Environmental representatives suggested several additions to the Common Programs including long-term and voluntary land retirement, expansion of the ecosystem restoration program (including 325,000 acres of Delta islands), and evaluation of the effects of water pricing in all alternatives. Water interests made a request to design an ecosystem restoration program that is flexible enough to respond to future demand for water.

Phase II Issues. CALFED was urged to learn from the CVPIA program, including the PEIS which is due out in August. Also, Central Valley interests suggested the public education program be expanded to reach out to people, who for the most part, are not paying attention to CALFED issues. CALFED should work within the broadest economic and social context, especially since the Central Valley is the fastest growing region of California. A future water project operations issue which may require conflict resolution is making up for voluntary spring water delivery cutbacks in the fall, especially during drought years. Major problems may arise when balancing significant biological uncertainty with water project operations protocols.

NEXT STEPS

We should ensure these issues are addressed or at least considered in the Phase I completion report.