

4310-94P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Reclamation

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, California

AGENCY: Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement/environmental impact report.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, CALFED, a consortium of federal and state agencies, proposes to participate in a joint programmatic environmental impact statement/environmental impact report (EIS/EIR) on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The State of California Resources Agency will be the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is intended to provide long-term solutions to the problems affecting the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Bay-Delta system). CALFED has requested that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) participate in the programmatic EIS/EIR as a cooperating agency for purposes of its regulatory program. The Corps has indicated that it will participate in such a role.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to CALFED by insert date 45 days after date of publication in the

FEDERAL REGISTER]. CALFED estimates that the draft EIS/EIR will be available for public review in the summer of 1997.

Through a series of scoping meetings, CALFED will seek public input on alternatives, concerns, and issues to be addressed in the EIS/EIR. The schedule and locations of the scoping meetings are as follows:

- April 9, 1996, MetroCentro Building, Eighth and Madison Streets, Oakland, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- April 10 1996, Jean Harvie Senior and Community Center, 14273 River Road, Walnut Grove, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- April 11, 1996, Tehama County Community Center, Gardenside Room 1500 South Jackson Road, Red Bluff, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- April 15, 1996, Red Lion Inn, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- April 16, 1996, Red Lion Hotel/San Diego, 7450 Hazard Center Drive, San Diego, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- April 17, 1996, Long Beach Renaissance Hotel, 111 E. Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, California, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- April 17, 1996, Holiday Inn, 303 E. Cordova, Pasadena, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- April 18, 1996, Red Lion Inn, 3100 Camino Del Rio Court, Bakersfield, California, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

ADDRESS: Written comments on the project scope should be sent to Mr. Rick Breitenbach, CALFED Bay-Delta Program, 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155, Sacramento, CA 95814.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Rick Breitenbach at the above address; telephone: (916) 657-2666.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The State of California and the Federal government are working together to stabilize, restore, and enhance the Bay-Delta system. State-Federal cooperation was formalized in June 1994 with the signing of a Framework Agreement by the Bureau of Reclamation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service; and the State of California Resources Agency, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Water Resources, California Environmental Protection Agency, and State Water Resources Control Board. These agencies, with management and regulatory responsibility in the Bay-Delta system, are working together as CALFED and will provide policy direction and oversight for the process. The Framework Agreement pledged that State and Federal agencies would work together in three areas of Bay-Delta management:

- water quality standards formulation,
- coordination of State Water Project and Central Valley Project operations with regulatory requirements, and
- long-term solutions to problems in the Bay-Delta estuary.

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. Four main problem areas have been identified for the Bay-Delta system. These are water quality, ecosystem health, water supply reliability, and system vulnerability. Six principles guide the development of the solutions to the problems identified for the four problem areas. The principles dictate that the solutions must be affordable, equitable, durable, and implementable; must reduce conflict among competing interests; and must not redirect significant impacts.

Scoping is an early and open process designed to determine the significant issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS/EIR. The following are significant issues that have been identified by CALFED agencies to date:

- declining fish populations;
- Delta water quality;
- agricultural and municipal water supplies and water quality;
- health of the Delta ecosystem;
- levee stability in the Delta;
- flow and direction of water in the Delta and tributary streams;
- land uses in the Delta;
- wetland, upland, and aquatic habitats in the Delta and tributary streams;
- upstream storage reservoirs;
- recreation opportunities; and
- power generation at upstream facilities.

In addition to a no action alternative, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program has drafted alternative solutions for problems in the Bay-Delta system. Each draft alternative is a combination of many actions, such as operational and policy changes, habitat restoration, and water flow adjustments, that together form a comprehensive solution to problems in the Bay-Delta system's four problem areas: water quality, ecosystem health, water supply reliability, and system vulnerability. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program operates on the premise that no single operational change or new facility will solve the myriad of interrelated problems in the Bay-Delta system. Therefore, each alternative is designed to include a balanced array of actions that, when combined, solve many problems simultaneously.

Far from being final products, the draft alternatives are subject to significant change based on further public input and technical analyses including the possibility of combining portions of more than one draft alternative to form a new potential alternative.

While the draft alternatives vary in emphasis and detail, they share certain measures or "core actions" that already enjoy broad acceptance among stakeholders. Currently, the draft alternatives include core actions addressing the following areas of concern:

- habitat restoration in the Delta and upstream of the Delta,
- reduction in the effects that diversions have on fish,
- management of anadromous fish,
- reduction in reliance on exports of water from the Delta,
- increase in water supply predictability,

- management of water quality, and
- improvements to system reliability.

Beyond their common core actions, the draft alternatives range from those that change the operation of the existing Bay-Delta system to those that restructure the system itself. One draft alternative, for example, emphasizes upgrading levees and restoring habitat in the existing system, possibly leading to fewer regulatory restrictions on water diverted from existing diversion points. In contrast, another draft alternative proposes constructing new diversion points and a new conveyance facility west of the Delta. None of the draft alternatives exclude either reoperation or restructuring.

The draft programmatic EIS/EIR will focus on the impacts and benefits common to all methods of implementing the long-term comprehensive plan. It will contain a general analysis of the physical, biological, social, and economic impacts arising from the long-term comprehensive plan. In addition, it will address the cumulative impacts of implementation of the long-term comprehensive plan as a whole and in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The programmatic EIS/EIR is intended to serve as an analytical overview document that will generally precede the completion of subsequent environmental documents on specific activities or groups of activities. When a specific method of implementing an activity or activities is proposed that is not fully addressed in the programmatic EIS/EIR, a subsequent environmental document will be prepared that addresses the specific physical, biological, social, and economic impacts arising from that method. In addition, the programmatic EIS/EIR is intended to provide sufficient information regarding the potential for adverse effects on

the aquatic environment and an adequate range and description of alternatives to meet the purpose and need and to satisfy the requirements of the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines to identify the least environmentally damaging alternative capable of meeting the program purpose.

A report will be available about 2 weeks prior to the first scoping meeting that will further elaborate on the draft alternatives. If a copy of the report is desired, please contact Ms. Beth Chambers at the above address. Ms. Chambers' telephone number is (916) 657-2666.

NOTE: If special assistance is required, contact Ms. Pauline Nevins. Please notify Ms. Nevins as far in advance of the workshops as possible and not later than April 1, 1996 to enable CALFED to secure the needed services. If a request cannot be honored, the requestor will be notified. A telephone device for the hearing impaired (TDD) is available from TDD phones at 1-800-735-2929; from voice phones at 1-800-735-2922.

Date

cc: Department of Interior
Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
1849 C Street NW Room 2340 MIB

Washington DC 20240-0001
(w/o att)

bc: Director, Program Analysis Office
Attention: W-5000, D-5100
Director, Operations
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(w/o att to each)

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