



May 12, 1998 - Comments to Calfed hearing, Encinitas, California

My name is Carolyn Chase, I live in Pacific Beach and I want to thank you for having this public hearing in San Diego County. But I am dismayed that you did not have more than one meeting in such a huge and highly populated area which is, more than anyplace else in the United States, truly at the end of the pipeline. Our watershed is the entire Sierra state water system and the Colorado River running from here to the upland streams in the far reaches of Colorado and the Great Rocky Mountains. Literally we are downstream from everyone. This can focus one's attentions.

Well we've got to do something don't we! I am very heartened that we all agree on that.

Here's another thing I'd like to share with y'all that also focused my attention:

Quoting from Cadillac Desert by Marc Reisner:

What federal water development has amounted to, in the end, is a uniquely productive, creative vandalism....The cost of all this...was a vandalization of both our natural heritage and our economic future, and the reckoning has not even begun. Thus far, nature has paid the highest price. Glen Canyon is gone. The Colorado Delta is dead. The Missouri bottomlands have disappeared. Nine out of ten acres of wetlands in California have vanished and with them millions of migratory birds. The great salmon runs in the Columbia, the Sacramento, the San Joaquin, and dozens of tributaries are diminished or extinct....The Bureau of Reclamation set out to help the small farmers of the West but ended up making a lot of rich farmers even wealthier at the small farmer's expense....We set out to make the future of the American West secure; what we really did was make ourselves rich and our descendants insecure....."...subsidies enrich big farmers, whose excess production depresses crop prices nationwide and whose waste of cheap water increases an environmental calamity that could cost billions to solve....the West's dependence on distant and easily disruptible dams and aqueducts is just the most palpable kind of vulnerability it has to face. The more insidious forces - salt poisoning, groundwater mining, the inexorable transformation of the reservoirs from water to solid ground (through siltation) are in the long run, a worse threat....Like so many great and extravagant achievements, from the fountains for Rome to the federal deficit, the immense national dam construction program that allows civilization to flourish in the deserts of the West contains the seeds of disintegration; it is the old saw about an empire's rising higher and higher and having farther and farther to fall.....the tragic and ludicrous aspect of the whole situation is that cheap water keeps the machine running and encourages waste.... No one loses except, of course the taxpayers at large." ... and the environment.

and here we are 20 years later. Has the paradigm changed?

I am very, very disappointed that you did not even have the courtesy, much less consider it your duty, to include a conservation-efficiency alternative. You would think that in the

interest of basic politically correct lip-service to the environment, you would have had a conservation/efficiency-only alternative - if even to prove that it wouldn't work!

So therefore you have to wonder, why didn't you do it? Could it be because one of the overriding forces at work here is the continued promulgation of big, concrete-water developers and bureaucracies which are steadfastly dragging their heels in moving into the 21st century?

Where is the analysis of when desalinization will become cost effective? I can tell you now that if you actually evaluated enforcing the Clean Water Act you'd find that desal becomes quite competitive. Where is the groundwater storage management commitment?

Above-ground storage doesn't make sense anymore with the vast population within the coastal zone and with the certainty of future earthquake events. God's natural storage, the Pacific Ocean, is sitting within a mile, and yet you still propose to destroy and degrade other inland watershed areas which are already responding to a large number of stressors.

In our existing economic system, which doesn't yet account for environmental damage and restoration, the system crashes and starts to die. The evidence for this is the increasing lists of endangered, threatened and extinct species, increasing concentrations of pollutants and toxins, lower water quality and increasing untreated salt water intrusions into the system. And yet you want us to continue to pay the bill for the same kinds of projects in the past?

Californians don't like limits. The human species in general resists change. These two human factors are colliding with the limits of freshwater supplies in the southwestern United States. Our demand for water will easily outstrip the ability for the watersheds to supply without increased protections and enforcement. Having reviewed the recent contract for the touted San Diego-Imperial County water transfer gives me no assurances that the key elements will be delivered to solve the problems we face in attempting to absorb the growth by continuing to sprawl the water system inland.

Where are the environmental and conservation assurances?

What do we need to be doing?

1. Require sufficient instream freshwater flows to the supplying ecosystems first. This is critical to protecting the health of all Californians who rely on this as a portion of their water supply. The water politicians, regulators and brokers need to establish, with unbiased scientific and biologic data, the minimum flows required to keep the natural systems healthy - and not to entertain a demand that will kill those systems. While Calfed is moving to support water transfers as part of the solution, you should be reminded that all of the water moving that goes on underlies all the of environment damages we are



Carolyn D. Chase
2511 Loring St
San Diego, CA 92109-2306

2/3

seeing today. So more of the same kinds of transfers would be wrong. Transfers and the more marketing-oriented plans to begin to introduce some kind of water-rights pricing can only be ethical if they really protect an environmental baseline and allow prices to rise against it. Systems must be monitored over time for health.

2. Require and maximize conservation on farms and in cities. When we establish effective and performance-based standards for users, conservation goals are advanced. When we maximize conservation, we avoid building new, expensive and damaging facilities. And it's fruitless to build new facilities when the water isn't there or the water isn't clean.

3. Protect the watersheds and reduce pollutant discharges into the systems.

But most importantly - provide a real conservation/efficiency alternatives analysis so we can see for ourselves what's possible and what it would cost.

Thank for you this opportunity to comment. Only then will it be fair to the public at large who you are ultimately asking to pay for your plans.



Carolyn D. Chase
2511 Loring St
San Diego, CA 92109-2306

3/3