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APR 13 1998

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0502

April 9, 1998

Lester Snow
CALFED executive Director
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Lester:

On March 16, 1998, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program released its Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report detailing the agency's Phase II Interim Report of preferred alternatives prior to final implementation. Because of the size of this document and its potential for negative impact on California communities I respectfully request an extension of time for comment on the draft EIS and its accompanying three alternatives.

After a brief review of the three preferred alternatives, I am forced to conclude that the selected alternatives do not adequately address the needs of northern California for watershed maintenance, flood control strategy, and offstream water storage. In addition, I must also express adamant opposition to any proposal implementing an "open channel isolated facility," or peripheral canal as it has been called in the past.

Included in each alternative are eight areas of primary focus. Of these elements, six are considered by the CALFED committee to "figure prominently" in any Bay-Delta selection, while the other two elements, water storage and water conveyance, may or may not be included in any CALFED alternative. I am deeply concerned that the designated elements fail to address the needs of established agricultural land and water uses, and that they fail to meet basic flood control needs for many northern California communities.

I am particularly concerned about proposals that would rely almost exclusively on a system of setback levees for flood control in the CALFED program. Implementation of this proposal could result in severe impacts both economically and on the ability of communities to protect themselves in to flood situations. It is highly probable that, under an extensive system of setback levees, thousands of acres of productive farmland would be converted into unproductive marshes and wetlands. This conversion would then have

a far reaching impact on the availability of jobs, and on the amount of commodity production in California's agricultural dependent economy. The resulting negative impact would be felt regardless of whether the land was converted through purchase from a "willing seller." In addition, residential areas included within the setback levee system could then be considered part of a designated flood plain. These communities could then be denied assistance in protecting and preserving their lives and property in the event of a flood.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated by flood control experts that levees only provide satisfactory flood protection when they are accompanied by adequate upstream water storage facilities. The proposed system of setback levees cannot therefore provide sufficient flood protection guarantees without a more extensive CALFED water storage program.

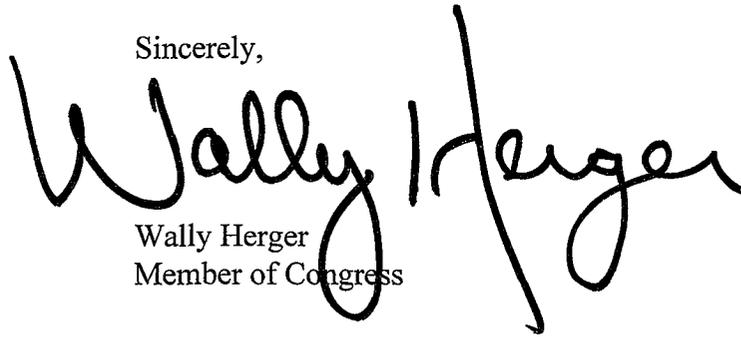
I would also like to underscore that I believe it is absolutely imperative for CALFED to recognize the need for managing and restoring the upper watersheds. It is in these areas that we have the greatest opportunity to capture and regulate additional water to assure downstream domestic, agricultural, and ecosystem benefits. The critical water problems of California cannot be adequately addressed without focusing serious attention on the entire watershed, including the source. Because watershed management can significantly affect the quality, quantity, and timing of water supplies, I feel it is imperative that more resources be committed through the CALFED process to watershed restoration and management in the northernmost part of the State.

Finally, I must once again express complete opposition to any implementation of a peripheral canal. According to proposed CALFED option three, the preferred form of water conveyance calls for construction of a peripheral canal or "open channel isolated facility" without providing for additional water storage. Such a facility has the potential of siphoning off huge amounts of water from the northern part of the state without compensation and without taking into consideration future water-use needs in communities where the water originates. These communities have been impacted already by unemployment rates that are two to three times higher than the national average. Any further depletion of resources by excessive downstream flows or by a failure to maintain watersheds could result in significant economic and environmental hardships for the entire north state.

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Lester Snow

Again, this issue is too important and too extensive to adequately respond to within the next few weeks. Please extend the comment period to give communities a better opportunity to respond to this critical situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wally Herger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "W" and "H".

Wally Herger
Member of Congress

DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
SACRAMENTO

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CALFED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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Comment

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Woody Honger
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