

May 26, 1998

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Lester Snow, CalFed Executive Director  
1416 Ninth Street, S.W. 1155  
Sacramento CA 995814

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Dear Executive Director Snow:

I urge you to ensure that CalFed creates and selects a "Smart Alternative" (a fourth alternative) based on conservation and restoration to provide ample and high quality water for California's families, wildlife, farms and businesses into the 21st century. The "Smart Alternative" would be a sustainable solution to the Bay-Delta program. Such an alternative would restore natural ecosystem processes affecting fish, birds, wetlands, rivers, delta and bays. It would make efficient use of existing water resources through aggressive conservation. This alternative would expand economic incentives for water conservation and water quality protection. It would minimize the need for costly structural remedies included in the CalFed report's alternatives, and maximize cost-effective water efficiency before considering these remedies. Water users would pay the full costs of water diversions. The "Smart Alternative" would rely on water recycling, ground water recharge and off-stream reservoirs. Federal and state agencies should manage the offstream reservoirs to minimize impact on the Bay-Delta environment.

This "Smart Alternative" would include Federal and State government actions. The Federal government should avoid proposing major Congressional appropriations for new storage or water transfer facilities. It should preserve the reforms in the 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act.

The State role should be more institutional in nature. This includes comprehensive reforms of water rights law (including ground water rights), water pricing, and water transfers. These reforms should provide incentives for cost effective water conservation and ground water management. (i.e costing less than the structural alternatives). The State should encourage contracts transferring water from marginal agricultural uses to urban uses. However, such transfers should not encourage "urban sprawl" as would such proposals as the Diablo Grande Water Resources Plan. Also, they should emphasize agricultural water conservation rather than taking large areas of land out of production. Some innovative farmers now show savings up to 50%. Although this 50% is applied water use, a 10 to 15% statewide savings in net agricultural water use appears reasonable for the "Smart Alternative."

Please enter these comments into the formal record for your Draft

Programmatic Environmental Impact Report and Statement.

These comments include some of the Sierra Club's views. They also reflect my sixteen years' experience (1959-1975) as an economist for the California Department of Water Resources.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lionel J. Lerner

DEPARTMENT OF  
WATER RESOURCES  
SACRAMENTO

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