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Agricultural Task Force for Resource Conservation and Economic Growth in the Central Valley

JUN 15 1998

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Erik Vink
American Farmland Trust

Committee to the Committee
Mary Handal
Napa

June 11, 1998

Mr. Lester Snow
Executive Director
CalFed-Bay /Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: The CalFed Program and Economic Growth in the Central Valley

Dear Mr. Snow,

On behalf of the members of the Agricultural Task Force for Resource Conservation and Economic Growth in the Central Valley, I write to apprise you of our views and make policy recommendations that we believe CalFed can and should integrate into the development and implementation of its Program towards achieving the goal of conserving and protecting resources vital to the long-term economic health and productivity of agriculture in the Central Valley. Without a doubt, supporting the continued vitality of agriculture through good land use planning is critical to other CalFed objectives such as ecological stability and improvement.

The immediately apparent relationship between our objectives and those of the CalFed relate to water availability and use and potential conversion of agricultural land to other purposes. While our major concern is the current trend in conversion of agricultural land to urban uses, the potential water supply impacts and land use conversion resulting from CalFed Program implementation are likely to have same or similar adverse effects upon the agricultural economies and communities of the Central Valley (and environmental values as well).

Not apparent in the CalFed process is the critical recognition that agriculture is not only the economic engine that provides necessary financial resources for current and future CalFed Program purposes, but it is also the long-standing steward of the land resource as well. Sustainable agriculture requires sustainable land use practice and efficient application of natural resources (such as water). As the CalFed process contemplates shifting water resources from Central Valley agriculture to instream flows and urban use, it must also contemplate the result of that action. Land fallowed as the result of skyrocketing water pricing and state and federal policies that inhibit agricultural use of water in the Valley will not stay fallow in the face of the significant pressure of urban sprawl. While we recognize

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that urbanization will occur, we strongly advocate responsible development and implementation of plans for such growth. We also urge that Cal Fed take an honest and critical view of the impacts of its land and water use policies and objectives in this regard.

Critical to the success of the CalFed planning effort is not merely recognition and analysis of the alternatives and how they might impact environmental and economic conditions as they exist today. An analysis of the "big picture" from a longer-term perspective is equally important. We must, as a matter of public policy, approach the CalFed "solution" from the view that what we decide in the next few years will impact the Valley for decades to come.

Without progressive thinking and action, the past "soft path" and "knee jerk" approach of reallocating water away from agriculture to urban and environmental uses will unfortunately continue. This is not a sustainable future for agriculture or for the Central Valley. The CalFed principles demand, and provide for a unique opportunity to undertake, comprehensive and bold action. In addition to enhancing the opportunity for, and efficiency of, ongoing conservation and transfer efforts, the Cal Fed must engage equal effort towards increasing the yield of our water infrastructure - an essential component of meeting the growing needs of our State as a whole. In accomplishing this objective, the CalFed "solution" should endeavor to replace the water taken from agriculture in recent years to meet new "environmental" demands, and should ensure that all new water resource demands should bear an obligation for developing new supplies.

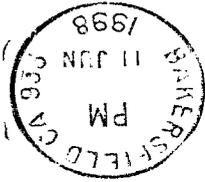
At this time, we would like to express our great appreciation for the hard work and dedication that all CalFed agencies have exhibited to date. It is the collective CalFed commitment to its founding and operational principles that will lead to the development and execution of a "solution" Program that successfully carries our state into the decades ahead.

Sincerely,



Jack Pandol
Chairman
Agricultural Task Force for Resource Conservation
and Economic Growth in the Central Valley

C-011708



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Mr. Lester Snow
Executive Director
CalFed-Bay/Delta Program
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