



CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM

01222

Public Comment

Date JUNE 13, 1998

JUN 16 1998

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program welcomes your participation. Please use the space below for your written comments (attach additional sheets if necessary).

Comments:

See attached

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June 13, 1998

I attended the CalFed Bay-Delta Program forum in San Jose a while back and wanted to add my two cents to the public comments. I have several points to make regarding the program, which I strongly support. I will try to keep them brief and to the point because I am sure that it takes quite a while to organize all of the comments and to then reply to them all.

- 1) Water conservation is a valid focus for such a program since it is water removal that is at the heart of many of the ecosystem-wide problems in the Bay-Delta region. Urban water conservation is a valid goal and one that cities have been working on for at least a decade. Cities have made great strides in this direction and there is much more that can be done. Such enterprises as developing a system to use recycled water for irrigation is useful but costly. It is very important that the CalFed program financially supports such urban water conservation efforts. But the urban communities can not do it all! I can not tell you how many times I have driven along I-5 in the central valley only to be dismayed by irrigation booms shooting large streams of water over the fields - in 100° heat! Studies show that in the dry central valley conditions, 90% of this water evaporates and does no good to the crops being grown. I have also seen water flooding out of pipes (it looks like a water main broke) to fill fields of rice and cotton. Again, much of this water evaporates without benefitting the plants. How many more times will cities be put on water rationing only to have to see water being wasted in this way. I realize that the crops grown in the central valley are very important, but I also know that there are more efficient methods of irrigation. I know that these more efficient methods are costly to install when the farmers already have a method, however inefficient, that works. That is where the CalFed program needs to concentrate its efforts. The final program must include some sort of financial aide to farmers to install the more efficient devices, just as CalFed is planning to encourage cities to do.
- 2) The whole CalFed project began because of the deteriorating state of the San Francisco Bay - Delta region. This objective can not be forgotten. The discussion of the ecosystem restoration projects was very vague and I just want to be sure that this all-important goal does not fall through the cracks as we try to solve so many other problems. I do, however, commend the CalFed program for looking at the whole picture (i.e. not just the environmental problems in the Bay-Delta region) because without finding solutions to the causes of the problem, simple restoration will not be successful in the long term.
- 3) As to the question of water storage, I do realize that the population in this state is growing rapidly. Eventually our water storage, however immense right now, will not satisfy our thirst. I do believe that water storage must be a part of the long (2-3 decade) program, but it should be an issue for the second or third decade. Conservation must first be our focus - both urban and rural - only after we have maximized our water usage through conservation should we consider new storage facilities. On this same note, it has been demonstrated time and time again how damaging to the riparian ecosystems dams can be. But dams do not have to be built on rivers and streams. Yes, I realize that it is easier to do so. But the external costs to

our fish and stream habitats are not included in the overall budget when such decisions are made. Dams are being built off of the streams yielding the benefits of water storage without requiring us to pay such a high environmental cost. I urge the CalFed program to support this type of new water storage.

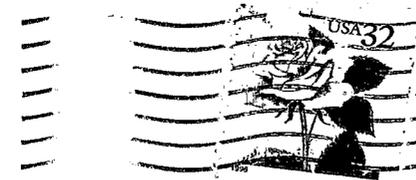
- 4) Finally, at the meeting there was mention of assurances. What assurances would we, the public, need to know that the CalFed project would progress as proposed. I must admit, I had not really thought about the question until the meeting. Without some assurances that, say, the farmers would be required to irrigate more efficiently, I would not be willing to conserve water myself, or support further water storage facilities. The only assurance that I could think of that would satisfy me would be some form of legislation that included the key elements of the CalFed plan (dam building, water conservation, money to which restoration programs, etc.). I understand that to ask for such a piece of legislation is a huge undertaking. But because of the long duration of the program, I suspect that those people that must give up something in the early part of the program (i.e. water cutbacks) only to get something in 20 years (i.e. a new dam) would not be willing to support the program unless the law said it would happen. I would be willing to consider other forms of assurances, but this is the only one I could think of.

Ok, so that was not as short as I had hoped, but I hope you understand my key concerns. Thanks for your time and I look forward to reading the final draft.

Sincerely,

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