

The Board of Supervisors

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Contra Costa County



Phil Batchelor
Clerk of the Board
and
County Administrator
(510) 335-1900

01267
JUN 29 1998

June 23, 1998

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

Re: Comments on the Draft EIR/S for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Dear Mr. Snow:

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors supports the efforts of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to identify and implement comprehensive solutions to the various problems associated with the Bay-Delta system, and believe that the plan contained in the Draft EIR/S is properly ambitious and contains elements which are of significant value. However, we are concerned that the CALFED program will propose drastic and probably damaging changes to the delivery of water through the Delta and only modest changes to other aspects of the Delta system that are more important to its long term health. To be more explicit, the Board of Supervisors does not support construction of an isolated canal or pipeline to convey water from the Sacramento River around rather than through the Delta, and urges the CALFED program to focus instead on maintaining the common Delta pool, on increasing fresh water flows to and through the Delta, on comprehensively addressing the causes of Delta pollution, on restoring the once-great fisheries of our region, and on improving the recreational and educational opportunities available to study and enjoy this important state-wide resource.

As CALFED revises the Draft EIR/S to develop a draft preferred alternative and a revised environmental document, we strongly recommend the following:

- **Select Conveyance Alternative 2, Improved Through-Delta Conveyance, as the preferred conveyance alternative:** Modifying Delta channels to improve the flow of water through the Delta will improve water quality both in the Delta and at the state and federal pumps. We see no justification for constructing an isolated canal to move the state and federal water project diversion points out of the Delta, and assert that any solution which endorses such a concept will only aggravate the very problems it purports to solve. Maintaining the Delta as a common pool for agricultural, environmental, and urban uses ensures a balanced distribution of resources which is far more binding and dependable than any agreement which calls for an isolated transfer facility.

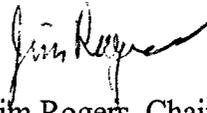
- **Strengthen the Water Quality Program by establishing enforceable performance criteria:** As currently written, CALFED's Water Quality Program includes broad, commendable goals for improving water quality in the Delta, but lacks any description of how this will occur. In particular, the Water Quality Program does not contain a specific plan for reducing the serious water quality problems caused by the discharge of agricultural drainage from San Joaquin Valley to the Delta. This component must be strengthened to assure that such goals, many of which are already stated within state regulations, will be achieved in the near future.
- **Define a specific financing strategy which fairly assigns costs based on benefits:** The financing package now only analyzes options, and a specific financing plan will be needed before much of the program can be supported. This more detailed plan must ensure that storage and conveyance facilities are primarily funded by those parties which would most benefit from them, namely those areas which export water from the Delta.
- **Define a package of assurances which specifically states how facilities will be operated and how water quality, freshwater flows, and fisheries will be protected:** Creating an acceptable solution will require strong assurances to all parties that plans will be implemented as described. A crucial part of this will be assuring that new storage and new conveyance facilities will be operated in a responsible manner and will protect water quality, flows, and fisheries. As another example, CALFED should also provide assurances that water entitlements purchased from farmers in the Delta will be used to maintain freshwater flows to the Delta and not used to increase exports to the south.
- **Improve the Water Use Efficiency Program to ensure that existing water supplies are used as efficiently as possible before additional water supplies are developed:** Water use efficiency guidelines for agriculture must be enforceable to be consistent with the enforceable guidelines established for urban users.
- **Select a storage alternative which maximizes freshwater flows for fish and minimizes environmental impacts:** New storage is needed to provide for expected population growth, operational flexibility, emergency reserves, and increased opportunities for boosting freshwater flows through the Delta during critical periods. However, such storage should be as environmentally benign as possible. Storage plans should include conjunctive use of groundwater and should restrict new diversions to periods of extremely high flows.
- **Refine the Ecosystem Restoration Plan to maintain ambitious restoration goals while minimizing and mitigating impacts to Delta agriculture.**
- **Identify means for improving public recreation and public education opportunities in the Delta.**

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Thank you in advance for your thorough consideration of these recommendations. We believe it is vitally important that CALFED succeed in its difficult mission to solve the long-standing problems with Bay-Delta, and we hope that the substantial progress you have made to date can continue through this crucial period in the process.

County staff will be sending more detailed comments on specific aspects of the Draft EIR/EIS under separate cover. Please feel free to contact John Kopchik in our Community Development Department at (925) 335-1227 if you should have any questions on this or other correspondence from the County.

Sincerely,



Jim Rogers, Chair
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

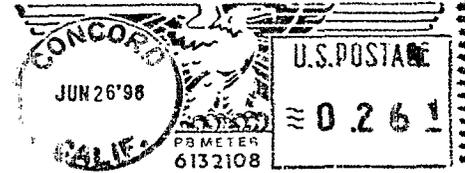
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