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June 30, 1998

CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Attention: Mr. Rick Breitenbach
CALFED Bay-Delta Program;
Kings County comments to Draft Programmatic EIS/EIR

Gentlemen:

The Kings County Board of Supervisors makes the following comments to the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

The idling of farm ground in our county is unacceptable. Kings County, therefore, strongly opposes proposed Alternative I. The reasons for our strong opposition are plain, simple and based on fairness and equity.

Like most agriculture based counties in the San Joaquin Valley, Kings County continues to suffer from 12-14% unemployment, and job opportunities for welfare-to-work recipients are sparse and difficult to come by. Idling farm land would exacerbate the loss of jobs and our local unemployment and social problems. The loss of tax dollars to Kings County, public schools, fire fund and library is irreplaceable and constitutes a shifting of problems from the Bay-Delta to Kings County. People who do not work, do not get a paycheck to spend on groceries, clothes, etc. Factors common to us such as geography, low education levels, poor infrastructure, air quality problems, and water

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reliability prevent our county's economic development efforts from being successful enough to provide new jobs to replace those lost to land idling. Kings County does not foresee a future in which agriculture is not our number one industry. Our fate is tied to the success of the agriculture industry.

Attached to this letter is a newspaper article telling the economic and social hardships caused by just one year of El Nino's disastrous weather in just one community in Kings County. Alternative I would create a permanent, man-made disaster, far greater in scope affecting the entire County of Kings.

Agriculture requires water that is reliable to provide consumers affordable food and fiber. Kings County supports Alternative II because it increases water yield through new and/or enlarged storage facilities and an increase in the carrying capacity of the present delivery system. We feel that this increased yield should be viewed first and foremost as a replacement to the San Joaquin Valley for the 800,000 plus acre feet of water diverted for fish habitat by the C.V.P.I.A. Any yield over and above that amount should be for additional urban requirements which increased population growth will necessitate. The cost of the necessary storage facilities, repair to the Delta and levees, etc. should be paid for by those who benefit--all the inhabitants of the state--via a bond issue or other financing means to equitably spread the burdens.

Storage facilities and delivery system improvements must be so closely linked with environmental benefits such as habitat restoration in the Bay-Delta that there is assurance that if one gets done so does the other. Legislation guaranteeing environmental approval; availability of financing; and protection from costly, time-consuming litigation on any aspect of the project would have to be enacted. Not vague promises but only hard facts constitute assurances of performance, in our opinion.

Alternative III would be acceptable also, except that it has greater practical problems for implementation, such as greater costs, more time to implement, more and more difficult environmental problems, right-of-way problems, and salinity considerations. Even if all the bugs get worked out, proposed Alternative III might not provide enough added benefit to be worth it.

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In summation, of the three alternatives presented, we believe Alternative II to be the most likely to meet the CALFED goal. If you go with Alternative I, Kings County has nothing else to talk to CALFED about as it is equal to the Bay area benefit assessment district where all the benefit is to them and the assessment is to us. That's not fair!

Sincerely,



Tony Barba, Chairman
Kings County Board of Supervisors

TB:AT:DE:calfdlr
Attachment