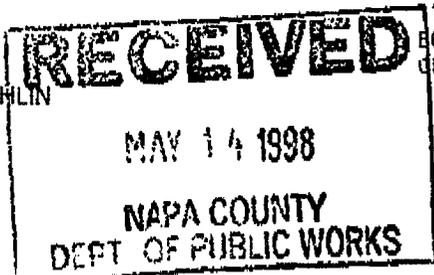




NAPA COUNTY

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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MARY JEAN MCLAUGHLIN
Clerk of the Board

May 12, 1998

Honorable K. Maurice Johannessen, Chairman
Senate Select Committee on CALFED
State Capitol, Room 5061
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Johannessen:

This letter is in response to your request for Napa County's comments on the CALFED Draft EIR. While the County has not yet submitted comments on the DEIR, this letter will serve to advise you of the nature of our interests in the CALFED process. Napa County stands to benefit from a successful, comprehensive CALFED program in three areas: water supply reliability, water quality improvement and ecosystem restoration.

Water Supply Reliability. Napa County is one of the 29 agencies that have water supply contracts with the State Water Project (SWP). The County receives its water through the North Bay Aqueduct (NBA). This water supply serves municipal and industrial uses only and supplements local surface water supplies. Four of the five cities in the County rely on SWP water to meet the needs of their residents. As you may be aware, Napa County has had a long and proud history of managing urban growth in order to protect its unique agricultural interests. This effort has been successful in large part because the County has been able to insure an adequate amount of groundwater for agriculture and its attendant rural residential and winery activities. The County contracted with the SWP for a sufficient amount of water to meet the projected growth needs of the cities with the expectation that the supplies were reliable. The lack of reliability of the SWP supplies is putting increased pressures on our cities to tap groundwater for additional protection. The use of such groundwater resources by cities will compromise the long-term viability of our \$1+ billion agricultural industry. The issue is already pitting agricultural interests against urban interests. If the agricultural economy weakens, landowners will begin seeking alternative uses for their land, which in turn will increase the pressure to convert land to urban development. Therefore it is critical that the preferred CALFED alternative be capable of significantly improving the water supply reliability of the State Water Project to its contractors.

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Water Quality Improvement. The CALFED Water Quality Program focuses primarily on reducing contaminants that enter rivers and streams. The location of the North Bay Aqueduct intake at Barker Slough is especially problematic with regards to water quality. All of the variations of the three CALFED alternatives include a component for evaluating the relocation of the intake to a more desirable location. The Solano County Water Agency, our neighbor and partner in the NBA, was the sponsor of a Proposition 204 grant request to the State Water Resources Control Board for the purpose of implementing a program to control runoff pollutants in the Barker Slough Watershed. This grant request was for \$580,000 and has been recommended for full funding. This is a good start. It is important to Napa County that the CALFED Program includes a solution to the water quality problem that the NBA experiences.

Ecosystem Restoration.

The CALFED Bay Delta Program (Category III – ecosystem restoration) has among its stated objectives “to improve water quality...” and “to improve and increase... habitat and..ecological functions in the Bay-Delta to support sustainable populations of diverse and valuable plant and animal species.”

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board has listed the Napa River as an “impaired water body” within the San Francisco Bay watershed. The Board has also given the river a high priority ranking for the implementation of policies in a rather short timeframe that will address the ecosystem water quality issues that led to this listing. The Regional Board has also designated the Napa River watershed to be of special significance because of its ecological significance and importance to the bay. In July 1997, the Napa County Land Trust (NCLT) submitted a three-phase proposal for Category III funding to assist in the acquisition and restoration of over 900 acres of historic wetlands in order to restore estuarine, riparian and aquatic habitat, flood and marsh plain. This proposal targeted the primary objective of the CALFED program by acquiring lands which were historically part of the San Francisco Bay Area wetland system and which directly influence the survival of several endangered species. Furthermore, these properties are in a key strategic location in the North Bay clearly under threat of future development.

Nevertheless, this project, the North Bay, and the entire Bay Area were virtually ignored in the allocation of Category III funding. The NCLT proposal requested \$8 million in three phases, including \$2 million in the initial phase and was, after a protracted process, awarded \$1 million. The NCLT proposal is closely related to the Napa River Flood Protection Project, was has been hailed nationwide as a model for future flood protection projects, since it will simultaneously provide environmental benefits, such as improved fish and wildlife habitat and water quality.

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When the NCLT proposal was submitted, the future of the Flood Protection Project was uncertain, pending the outcome of a local sales tax ballot measure. Nevertheless, the acquisition and restoration project was a "stand-alone" project that would be beneficial on its own merits. However, now that the sales tax and the Flood Protection Project -- is a reality, the Board of Supervisors believe that the County is in a very strong position to be able to put to beneficial use the additional CALFED funding to greatly complement the already significant environmental benefits of the Flood Protection Project. The combined results would significantly further the ecosystem restoration goals of CALFED.

This letter was discussed and approved on a 5-0 vote by the Napa County Board of Supervisors.

Very truly yours,



Vince Ferriole, Chairman
Napa County Board of Supervisors