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Comments on CALFED Programmatic EIS/EIR

June 29, 1998

Lester A. Snow, Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Water Quality Technical Group
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Lester:

I wish to provide comments on selected aspects of the Programmatic EIS/EIR for the CALFED Bay/Delta Program. My comments focus on the significant deficiencies that exist in the water quality components of this EIS/EIR. These comments are based on almost 40 years of professional activity devoted to water quality evaluation and management, which include nine years of work in the Sacramento, CA area associated with the Sacramento River watershed and Delta.

By far the greatest deficiency in this Programmatic EIS/EIR is the failure to address the potential impacts of each of the proposed alternative approaches for diverting Sacramento River water to Central and Southern California on Delta and Upper San Francisco Bay water quality. As it stands now, this Programmatic EIS/EIR cannot be certified as complying with CEQA requirements for full disclosure of the potential impacts of the proposed project. CALFED must, if it is to gain credibility among the water quality management community, critically evaluate the potential impacts of each of the three proposed alternatives for diverting Delta water south, with respect to their impact on Delta and Upper San Francisco Bay water quality. Frankly, it was unbelievable to me that CALFED would propose three alternatives for this diversion without performing the necessary review of what the consequences of each of these alternatives could be to the water quality within the Delta and downstream of the Delta in San Francisco Bay.

In the 1.5 years in which I have been involved in reviewing CALFED overall, and in particular CALFED Water Quality Program activities, I have repeatedly observed, as have many others, that water quality, as it affects Delta and downstream of the Delta aquatic life, receives a low level of priority. There are many who look on the CALFED process as one of legitimizing the continued diversion of Delta water south, where, in exchange, funds are being made available to "fix" the Delta. The "fixing" of the Delta, however, has major water quality components that have not been, and may not be, reliably defined and implemented if the current approach toward incorporating water quality issues into CALFED activities persists.

The water quality management program has been, and continues to be, in shambles. As you know, I have provided Rick Woodard and other members of the Water Quality Management Program staff, and you, detailed discussions of the problems with this program. I request that my previous correspondence on these issues be incorporated into the administrative record for this Programmatic EIS/EIR. Many of my comments on the highly significant deficiencies in the CALFED Water Quality Program are available as

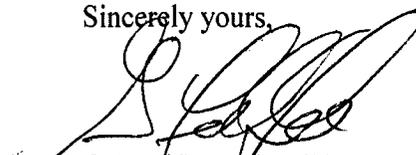
downloadable files from my website, <http://members.aol.com/gfredlee/gfl.htm>. The crash program to develop ten-page write-ups on the water quality problems associated with the Delta and each of its tributaries has further heightened the concern about the credibility of this program. Several months ago I provided Rick Woodard with an email covering the significant technical deficiencies in the draft EIS/EIR Water Quality Program. Virtually every paragraph in this write-up contains significant technical errors. The situation was so bad that I finally quit commenting, since the number of pages of comments exceeded the number of pages that I reviewed. As I indicated in that email, CALFED needs to start over with respect to developing a credible water quality management program associated with the diversion of the Delta waters south, that address Delta water quality issues as they impact the resources of the Delta and San Francisco Bay.

In my almost 40 years of work on various types of water quality management activities, I have never encountered a situation where an organization such as CALFED has had so little support of its activities from the technical community. There are many people, including myself, who have devoted large amounts of time trying to address some of these problems. However, when we find that our recommendations are completely ignored as part of developing the Water Quality Management Program that is included in the draft EIS/EIR, there is little incentive to continue to work with CALFED.

I urge CALFED to immediately appoint a panel of experts who would work with CALFED management in defining the issues that need to be resolved associated with assessing the impacts of the three alternatives for diversion of Delta waters south on Delta and San Francisco Bay water quality - beneficial uses. The results of this panel should be incorporated into the revised EIS/EIR. I fully appreciate that the deliberations of the panel will not provide definitive answers to issues. They will, however, define the issues that need to be addressed before any selection of the alternative diversion approaches is made. This issue is a far higher priority than all of the other Water Quality Program activities combined.

I have attached an edited version of the comments that I sent to Rick Woodard and Bruce Macler on April 13, 1998 on the significant technical problems with the existing draft EIS/EIR Water Quality Program. To the extent that I have time and resources, I will continue to provide comments to CALFED. The amount of my time that is available could be significantly increased if support were available to help cover some of the costs to me. Please contact me if you have questions; and please include this material in the comments on the current draft EIS/EIR.

Sincerely yours,



G. Fred Lee, PhD, DEE

GFL:jk
Enclosures