

**Regional Council of
Rural Counties**



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June 30, 1998

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

Attention: Mr. Rick Breitenbach

RE: Comments on Draft Programmatic EIS/EIR

Dear Mr. Snow:

The Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the CALFED Programmatic Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement, as filed on March 16, 1998 with the State Clearing House (#96032083). We note for the administrative record that these comments are filed in a timely manner consistent with the CALFED memo dated May 20, 1998, which extended the comment period to July 1, 1998. We also note that the environmental document circulated for the public review and comment includes all of the technical appendices, including the Draft Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan and the Executive Summary.

The Board of Directors of Regional Council of Rural Counties approved these attached comments at its meeting Thursday, June 18, 1998 in Sacramento. We wish to preface our comments with the assurance that RCRC, on behalf of its 27 member Counties, continues to conditionally support the CALFED Program and a long-term, durable, affordable, equitable, solution to restoration of the Bay-Delta Ecosystem.

The Regional Council of Rural Counties' collective membership comprises a land area of nearly forty one million acres. These lands produce total resource commodities and services of over three and one half billion dollars annually, based upon direct resource values (not the total revenue produced by resource dependent activities). Water accounts for more than 60% of that total value, followed by other commodities totaling approximately 20% and services also totaling 20%. Its annual agricultural production value is approximately three and one half billion dollars. The area is home to over one and one half million Californians. Our membership is the source of the Bay-Delta Ecosystem's water - its lifeblood - as it were. Approximately 80% of the water upon which the Bay-Delta depends comes from our membership area.

We wish to underscore that our comments, may be unlike many of the comments submitted on the above referenced document by other interested parties. To understand the difference in both the focus and

and institutional changes have the very real potential to make substantial changes in the existing deficiencies in the solution area as well.

RCRC does not believe that CALFED should create further reinvestment administrative boundaries between one portion of the Bay-Delta Ecosystem ("the problem area") and the remainder of the ecosystem ("the solution area"). RCRC does not believe that an adequate environmental analysis, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, which purports to establish one of the largest ecosystem restoration programs in the United States, can do so without examining the entire ecosystem. An eco-segment, or caste system approach of trading environmental benefits in one area of the ecosystem for impacts in another portion is not acceptable and is not consistent with CALFED's solution principles of no redirected impacts.

Any attempt by CALFED to financially "release" responsibility for those utilizing resources from one part of the ecosystem, in order to make a Bay-Delta solution more affordable to the same parties currently benefiting from exploitation of the ecosystem, is not acceptable.

In short, as a large part of the CALFED solution Area (please see included map) our membership does not expect to passively allow for the adoption of a tragically flawed formula of ecosystem reinvestment in one part of the ecosystem (the solution area), so as to allow more inexpensive solutions in another part of the ecosystem (the problem area and the water export delivery areas). We do not believe that CALFED has addressed this issue in its program or the present environmental documentation, yet it is at the very foundation of a durable solution.

The focus of the program has been, and continues to be (as reflected in the current environmental document), emphasis on the statutory delta and its problems to the detriment of the complete San Francisco Bay-Delta Ecosystem. The primary objective seems to be recognition of the problems in the Delta itself and then the equivalent of agency denial for the remainder of the ecosystem. CALFED claims to be taking a holistic approach to ecosystem management, while its programs indicate otherwise.

Despite our urgings and comments to the contrary, significant environmental information available in the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project Report has either been overlooked or ignored in the present Programmatic analysis – the very place it would have been of most use.

Additionally, expertise in the scientific disciplines for those areas outside the geographic area of the Delta itself has not been brought to bear on the problems at hand. Despite our specific comments to the contrary, CALFED has no on-staff scientific expertise in the disciplines of watershed management, coniferous forest ecosystems, or wildfire ecology. These are very critical areas to be addressed – if CALFED were examining the health of the complete ecosystem.

tenor of our comments one must first attempt to understand the relationship of our membership to a CALFED solution – regardless of selected alternative.

Communities in our membership are dependent upon the ecosystem for a combination of direct and indirect natural resource benefits. Not all of these benefits are tangible in economic terms, but may be described as aesthetic or sense-of-place values.

These areas have historically had local natural resources captured and used in other geographic locations of the state. Those individuals, corporations and agencies reaping the benefits associated with the resources have in some cases provided an economic reinvestment to the ecosystem at a level insufficient to maintain the health of the ecosystem. Furthermore, there has been little recognition by either the Federal or State governments of their responsibility in this matter. CALFED, as a collection of Federal and State Agencies, appears to be acting in a concerted manner to restore part of the ecosystem. CALFED, from the standpoint of ecosystem reinvestment and restoration, has the potential to provide for a continuation of the status quo, a change for the worse, or a change for the better.

Many of our ecosystems are in decline due in great part to the fabric of institutional incapacities. That fabric has been woven for the most part, by the Federal and State governments, which are of course the authority behind CALFED.

These institutional incapacities include:

1. Failures due to fragmented control of the ecosystems among competing resource management entities/agencies. The fragmentation is not only in ownership patterns, but also confusing and conflicting jurisdictions, authorities and missions.
2. A failure of an adequate exchange mechanism among beneficiaries and management entities to capture and distribute reinvestment revenue streams in proportion to benefits received by parties outside the geographic region.
3. A current, and potentially growing, detachment between those who control the ecosystems and communities through regulations, mandates, regulatory authorities, and legislative fiat, and the ecosystems and the people who reside in the ecosystem.
4. An inability to adjust ecosystem management actions commensurate with changes in demands, economic influences, public interests, community of place values, and population changes.

CALFED, through its mission to restore the Bay-Delta Ecosystem (but focused on something called “the problem area”) will be relying on a multitude of actions within the CALFED solution area, to mitigate for impacts within “the problem area”. Those actions

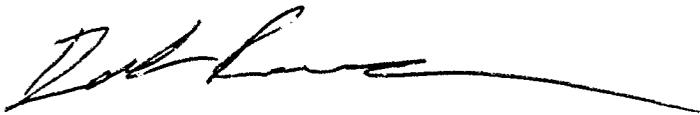
As CALFED has moved towards a goal of "balancing" impacts and financial analysis, despite our comments in the Ecosystem Restoration Roundtable, before the Bay Delta Advisory Council and during the CALFED Scientific Review Panel meetings of last spring, no ecosystem wide natural resources economic modeling has taken place and no resource economist(s) familiar with the entire ecosystem has been placed on staff.

We are disappointed in the CALFED failure to recognize the program's shortcomings. We note that the sub-optimal CALFED performance responding to valid public comments and suggestions, from such a large segment of the solution area, will have future implications in acceptance of any assurance package. A successful CALFED assurance package must be premised upon a reaffirmation and honoring of past assurances as well as meaningful two way communication with the public.

We shall insist upon a significant change in the focus of the program to remedy the issues referenced above. Short of this change, we currently see little hope of reaching a CALFED solution, which is acceptable to our membership. RCRC will measure CALFED's intentions on this matter by deeds, not words.

With this premise established, and we hope understood by the CALFED Policy Group, we have attached specific comments on the Draft EIS/EIR.

Sincerely,



Dick Dickerson, President
Regional Council of Rural Counties
Supervisor, Shasta County

cc: RCRC Delegates/Water Committee
Marcia L. Basque, Executive Director
John Mills, Water Consultant
Michael Jackson, Water Attorney

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