

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

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

Subject: Comments on CALFED Bay-Delta Draft Programmatic EIR/EIS

Dear Mr. Snow:

The Bay Area Water Users Association (BAWUA) is pleased to submit these comments on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's Draft Programmatic EIR/EIS, dated March 1998. While necessarily general in nature, the programmatic DEIR/EIS represents a significant step toward well-reasoned management of the Bay-Delta system, a resource of national significance. BAWUA is an association representing the collective interests of the 29 utilities that purchase water on a wholesale basis from the City and County of San Francisco's Public Utility Commission (SFPUC). The management of the Bay-Delta directly or indirectly affects all of our members. Although CALFED demonstrates significant progress toward identifying and characterizing scientific and other issues, BAWUA believes the draft EIR/EIS is deficient in several areas and that modifications are warranted before a final EIR/EIS can be certified.

Background

BAWUA's member utilities serve a significant portion of northern California's population and support a major portion of the State's economy. Collectively, they provide retail water service to over 1.4 million residential customers in Alameda, Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. The member utilities also provide water to the numerous commercial and industrial customers in this three-county area, including biotech firms, automobile manufacturers, beverage bottling plants, and other commercial enterprises, as well as to the many high tech industries in Silicon Valley.

BAWUA's members rely on a variety of water supplies and have a history of working toward efficient use of these resources. These utilities currently purchase two-thirds of the water produced by SFPUC's regional water supply, treatment and delivery system. Some of the utilities have additional sources of water, including groundwater, recycled water and State Water Project water. Several of the agencies located in Santa Clara County also purchase local, State Water Project, Central Valley Project and water from the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD).

As an active participant in the development of the original Memorandum of Understanding for Urban Water Conservation, BAWUA helped develop the initial Best Management Practices (BMPs). Through its participation in the recent revision of the BMPs, BAWUA established the measure requiring wholesale and retail water utilities to remove certain disincentives for implementing water conservation measures. Through the SFPUC's wholesale water rates, BAWUA members support

MEMBERS: Alameda County Water District • Belmont County Water District • City of Brisbane • City of Burlingame • California Water Service County • Coastside County Water District • Cordilleras Mutual Water Association • City of Daly City • East Palo Alto Water District • Estero Municipal Improvement District • Guadalupe Valley Municipal Improvement District • City of Hayward • Town of Hillsborough • Los Trancos County Water District • City of Menlo Park • City of Millbrae • City of Milpitas • City of Mountain View • North Coast County Water District • City of Palo Alto • Purissima Hills Water District • City of Redwood City • City of San Bruno • City of San Jose • City of Santa Clara • Skyline County Water District • Stanford University • City of Sunnyvale • Westborough Water District • ASSOCIATE MEMBER: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

SFPUC staff and consultant participation in statewide water management activities. In addition, BAWUA is signatory to the New Don Pedro Settlement Agreement ("FERC Agreement"). As a signatory, BAWUA works with other members of the Tuolumne River Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to ensure that the provisions of the FERC Agreement, designed to increase the populations of naturally spawning salmon, are fulfilled in an effective, efficient manner.

Currently BAWUA and the SFPUC are conducting water supply studies to support updating their urban water management plans and evaluation of water use efficiency measures and water recycling. These efforts, together with work recently performed by the SCVWD, provide a first-ever opportunity to address water supply, supply reliability, water use efficiency and water quality issues, considering both local and regional cost effectiveness, for a major portion of the Bay Area. BAWUA and some of its member utilities are currently participating in the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program, another effort directed toward establishing regionally efficient solutions for water management.

Comments

The above background and summary of prior and current activities establish the perspective for these comments on the DEIR/EIS. Specific comments include: (1) the need for sound environmental protections, without which urban water supplies would continue to be unreliable; (2) that solutions need to be flexible, permitting local agencies to exercise their authorities and take actions appropriate to local requirements; and (3) that solutions must produce reliable water quality, a basic measure of consumer confidence at the tap.

- (1) Environmental Protections for the Bay-Delta System. It is essential that the CALFED process produce sound environmental protections for the Bay-Delta system. The greatest source of unreliability in urban water supplies is the unstated menu of actions that may be taken if ecosystem health declines. Without an ecosystem management program favored by broad support, the ecosystem may continue to be in jeopardy and urban water supplies will remain unreliable. As users of diverse sources of water, the BAWUA members continue to support well-founded programs such as the one currently underway on the Tuolumne River. This approach could be cited by CALFED as an example of what can be done through cooperative efforts. The DEIR/EIS should recognize the contribution being made by this program toward CALFED objectives.

- (2) Water Conservation. While some BAWUA members are not currently signatories to the MOU for Water Conservation, all BAWUA members have water conservation programs and recognize the importance of water conservation in the future. The recently revised BMPs eliminate one disincentive to implement water conservation measures for agencies that purchase water from a wholesale entity. The CALFED process should promote similar opportunities. Open questions remain as to appropriate mechanisms to facilitate implementation of water conservation measures. Properly structured programs should require, and permit, local authorities to implement those solutions best suited to their areas. For example, the cost-effectiveness guidelines for water conservation measures establish a basis for agencies to decide which measures make economic sense to implement in a given service area. Agencies receiving all or a portion of their water supplies from wholesale agencies may or may not require the support of a wholesale agency to implement their programs. Implementation mechanisms involving wholesale-retail relationships should provide the

affected agencies the flexibility to determine what means of support, if any, are needed to implement water conservation measures. Ultimate responsibility for water conservation program implementation should rest with the local water purveyor.

- (3) Water Recycling. BAWUA members envision both water conservation and water recycling as necessary elements of urban water supply management. Several existing water recycling projects within BAWUA's geographic area provide both environmental and water supply benefits. New and expanded recycling opportunities are under consideration by water and wastewater agencies in the Bay Area. Additional recycling can be facilitated if the local agencies have mechanisms through which common benefits can be shared and costs recovered. Studies currently underway, such as the Water Supply Master Plan and the Bay Area Regional Recycled Water Program, will evaluate ways in which the issues of shared benefits and cost distribution might be accommodated. The CALFED program should accommodate these efforts to address the environmental, wastewater disposal and water supply aspects of water recycling efficiently and effectively. CALFED should avoid any overly prescriptive approach which might inhibit these efforts.
- (4) Water Quality Reliability. The reliability of water quality is as important as the reliability of the source itself. Because some uses will be more sensitive to quality than others, the CALFED solution should address the reliability of water quality for all beneficial uses. The reliability of the quality of drinking water at the tap is a matter of public confidence as well as public health. Given this opportunity to craft lasting solutions, the CALFED solution should produce lasting confidence in the quality of drinking water supplies. Because the combined service area of BAWUA members relies on both Delta, tributary and local supplies, the quality of each source water is important to us. Neither tributary nor Delta sources should be allowed to degrade further, and the quality of all sources should be improved. The measures invoked, however, should be those that also increase the reliability of the quality of the raw water source. Others will make the case for ensuring source water quality is sufficiently high in order to enable utilities to achieve future drinking water standards at reasonable cost. It is important that solutions support achieving higher future water quality standards with high reliability and public confidence.

The preceding comments reflect the most fundamental concerns BAWUA has regarding the development of Bay-Delta solutions. We appreciate being given the opportunity to comment and look forward to continued involvement in the process. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please feel free to call me at (650) 349-3000.

Sincerely yours,



Arthur R. Jensen
General Manager

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cc: Board of Directors and members

