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AUG 21 2000

CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Julian, CA  
Aug 16, 2000

Mr Steve Ritchie, Acting Executive Director  
Cal-Fed Bay Delta Program  
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1155  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Cal-Fed EIS-EIR Barnes to Ritchie page 1 of 2

Dear Sir:

I have been studying California's water problems since I was in College in the 50's. Long enough to know that there are no easy or simple solutions. I have not been able to review the entire Cal-Fed EIS-EIR in the short time allowed for comments and I urge you to extend the comment period. However, because of the short comment period I inclose the following remarks based on my review to date.

First it is obvious that the present statewide water system is inadequate for existing uses except in a few local areas.

Second, there is going to be a reduction in Colorado River water available to Calif., and many underground basins are being overdrafted.

Therefore the present system is not sustainable even before more water is allocated to fish, wetlands and other environmental uses.

Finally the urban and suburban areas are growing at rapid rates and will surely need more water.

Because agriculture uses a high percentage of the total water used beneficially in the State politically the easiest answer to the dilemma is to propose a reduction in irrigated areas.

My wife's and my families have been involved in Calif. agriculture for over a century. We are one of the few people in Calif. Agriculture that operate largely on non-irrigated land and I can tell you that we can continue only because of the irrigated areas we have.

It looks to me like, considering the increasing demand for water by wildlife (in the broadest sense) and cities and urban areas that the current proposed reduction in irrigated areas is only the first minor step in the long term reduction in irrigated agriculture implied by the EIS-EIR. Some of this reduction is inevitable. However, I believe that the implied continuing reductions, and the social, economic and environmental effects thereof are inadequately discussed in the EIS-EIR. These

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environmental, economic and social effects and tradeoffs of drying up 150,000(or however many) acres are significant, and should be clearly stated. Especially the tradeoffs for increased urban-suburban use.

I also believe that additional off-stream storage should be developed as soon as possible, with locations urgently needed both north and south of the Delta. The effects of delaying these projects is inadequately discussed in the EIS-EIR.

Clearly the Delta can be improved greatly with less total water use by a partially or fully isolated structure. It looks to me that the present proposals do not adequately model the salt water intrusion that historically occurred annually during times of low water flow. This information is needed to evaluate the adequacy of the current proposal, and instream flow needs.

Underground storage of water in some already lowered basins may be practical, but only if the basins stop overdrafting. Either long term water supplies to replace that used by basins that significantly and regularly overdraft must be proposed or reduction in their water yield reflected in the EIS-EIR.

The few basins that are currently in near balance with the recharge rate should not be drained to postpone difficult decisions or to obfuscate the magnitude of the surface water shortfall.

South of Stockton (and perhaps further north) gray water use and water recycling must be instituted. Problems needing further information in the EIS-EIR are how to overcome the public's concern, and more importantly what to do with the accumulating salts. Increased ag water use efficiency also accelerates the accumulation of salts. The EIS-EIR does not adequately discuss water reuse and the disposal of solutes.

In summary I believe that the EIS-EIR fails to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of the various Cal-Fed Bay Delta proposed actions, especially as they relate to agriculture.

These comments are based on only a cursory review. I mentioned at the beginning that the comment time period is too short to do a good job, and I urge you to extend it.

I would be happy to discuss these issues with you or your staff at any time.

Sincerely

  
Franklin L. "Woody" Barnes Jr.  
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