

July 16, 1997

Governor Pete Wilson
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

*overall
CALFED
Program
resources
needed*

Dear Governor Wilson,

In the coming months your administration will be making critical decisions regarding California's implementation of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, write today to urge you to fully utilize all of the tools provided by the SDWA to insure that our drinking water receives the highest possible level of protection at its source. Protecting and restoring rivers, aquifers, and wetlands is the simplest and most cost-effective way to insure high-quality drinking water to all Californians. For this reason, watershed and wetlands protection advocates, consumers, populations vulnerable to health problems associated with contaminated water, physicians and other care providers, farmers, and environmentalists have all endorsed this approach.

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Recently adopted amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act significantly increase the capacity of states and water systems to protect drinking water at its source. The Act firmly establishes intent to adopt health protective standards, to guide systems towards a multi barrier approach to protect drinking water and increase the focus on prevention. In particular, the SDWA now includes provisions which protect source water, increase public awareness and participation in protection efforts, and require public notification of imminent health risks. Consistent with this approach and these provisions, we urge you to take the following steps in order to protect our drinking water.

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1. Make the assessment and protection of source water a high priority.

Source water protection is the first and often most effective barrier to drinking water contamination. By protecting source waters, the need for expensive new treatment facilities and other infrastructure can be greatly reduced, thus lowering the burden on communities and taxpayers over the long run.

*WA Actions
(Source Control)*

A one time only "set aside" for source water assessment is available in fiscal year '96/'97's State Revolving Fund allocation. This means over \$10 million is available for California to find threats to drinking water: the first step in an effective source water protection program. We urge the state to set aside the maximum allowable funds available this year to do the required planning and assessment for this critical component of drinking water protection.

2. The public has a right to know and participate.

Only when the public is fully informed of all the threats to their drinking water will we have the level of citizen participation needed to safeguard our drinking water for the future. Key choices are being made in every community that can affect people's lives, and the federal law states that the public has the right to know and participate in these decisions. Groups representing water consumers, public health advocates, and environmental interests must be actively engaged

*WA Program
(Stakeholder
Involvement)*

throughout the implementation process.

A clear and specific summary of the source water assessment that lists major current and potential polluters and is accompanied by a map should be disclosed via an annual report distributed to all water consumers. Detailed background information data must be made available to the public on request.

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We urge the state to set aside adequate funding from the State Revolving Fund to assure meaningful outreach, travel assistance, and other associated expenses as source water protection plans are developed and implemented so that water consumers, public health advocates, vulnerable populations and environmental groups can fully participate.

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Finally, clear guidelines should be given to water systems for the adoption of emergency public notification procedures to advise and warn the public, with special attention to vulnerable populations, as a final barrier, in the event that water borne pathogens or other contaminants pose an imminent health risk.

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3. Provide funds for projects that address the most serious existing health risks.

Recognizing that Congress has only appropriated a fraction of the money needed to bring all existing state water systems into compliance with current drinking water standards (and those to be adopted under the 1996 Amendments), we urge that priority be given to funding for projects that improve water quality in existing water systems. Water projects designed primarily to supply or attract new residential development should not be eligible for funding from the State Revolving Loan Fund. Additionally, special attention should be given to funding drinking water protection efforts in disadvantaged communities, many of whom suffer from the worst water quality.

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4. Protect the Delta, instream flows and drinking water.

Compliance with drinking water standards should complement, not compromise, protection and restoration of the Sacramento Delta. Preventing pollution and protecting water at its source is a far preferable and more cost-effective approach to ensuring safe drinking water than diverting still more water from the threatened Sacramento Delta. Such an approach enhances environmental quality and biodiversity while allowing natural filtration to purge remaining harmful contaminants from our water supply.

WOP
Existing WQ

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To the extent to which further steps are necessary to meet state and federal drinking water standards, other treatment options, such as GAC, reverse osmosis, and micro filtration, should be pursued and given priority for funding. While expensive, these options may be less costly and provide greater assurances of long-term protection than do isolated facilities in the Delta. Protecting drinking water quality must go hand in hand with preserving and restoring important aquatic habitat in the Bay and Delta, as well as riparian ecosystems throughout the state.

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5. Measurable, Specific Results Insure Accountability.

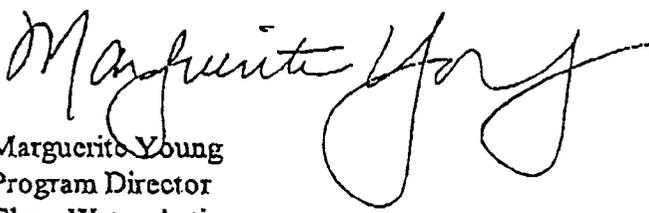
While some flexibility is necessary in a state or locally based drinking water program to address specific problems and to take advantage of opportunities, there should be safeguards that prevent taxpayer dollars from being wasted. All programs should have specific, measurable and

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meaningful goals for improving drinking water quality. Measurable reductions in contaminant levels, or elimination and containment of potential contamination sources are good examples of such an approach. Demonstrated reductions in waterborne disease outbreaks or endemic diseases are another. Monitoring should take place before, during, and after the adoption of all safe drinking water projects and programs to ensure that measurable results are achieved.

We urge you to use the full powers of your office to provide for clean, safe drinking water and the protection and restoration of our rivers, aquifers, and wetlands.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations,



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**CALFED
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