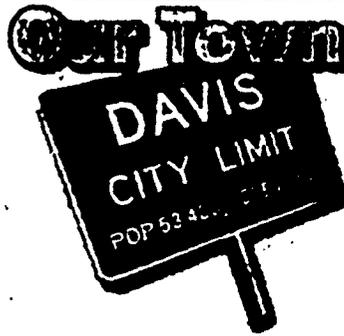


LIVING. A-9

Farewells and
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California

50 cents

Water transfer plan criticized by Yolo official

◆ Calfed Bay-Delta Program would have serious local impacts

By MELANIE TURNER
Enterprise staff writer

WOODLAND — Yolo County Supervisor Dave Rosenberg of Davis is sharply critical of a new plan "to transfer the water wealth of Northern California to the thirsty south under the guise of environmental protection."

Rosenberg, in a speech Monday on local water issues at a Kiwanis Club luncheon, characterized the Calfed Bay-Delta Program, an effort involving both state and federal agencies, as a charade.

Calfed is a program initiated

in 1995 by Gov. Pete Wilson and the Clinton administration to address environmental and water management problems associated with the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento/San Joaquin River delta system.

The Bay-Delta is an intricate web of waterways created at the junction of the bay and the rivers and the watershed that feeds them. It's an important part of California's natural environment and the economy, supplying drinking water for more than 22 million Californians and irrigated water for more than 4 million acres of the world's most productive farmland.

Habitat systems are declining

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in the Bay-Delta. Water supply reliability has declined and many levees are structurally weak.

The Calfed Bay-Delta Program is currently in the environmental review phase. It targets 32 rivers, creeks and tributaries.

Yolo County supervisors have been frustrated, feeling left out of the Calfed process. Rosenberg met with the program's assistant director and director, Dick Daniel and Lester Snow, on Oct. 24.

"I informed them of our displeasure at not having been kept in the loop," Rosenberg told his fellow supervisors at a recent meeting. "They were frankly very apologetic."

Although Calfed officials continue to tout the plan as "voluntary," public officials and others remain skeptical.

"Voluntary has effects on neighbors, effects on streams," Rosenberg said.

The Board of Supervisors plans to hold a public educational meeting on Calfed on Tuesday, Nov. 25, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Council Chamber at Davis City Hall, 23 Russell Blvd. The meeting is scheduled to be aired live on local cable Channel 7.

Representatives from every major water agency plan to attend, Rosenberg said.

"We want to cast the light of day on this Calfed proposal" in order to protect the county's resources, he added.

Yolo County, which is heavily dependent on water for its crops and its people, is a water-deficient county. The Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, in fact, has identified the need for an additional 120,000 acre-feet per year to meet the irrigation and population needs of the county.

According to Rosenberg, the water district, which operates 180 miles of canals, is working with the cities to try to get a water rights application for diversion of water

from the Sacramento River.

"We, in this county, have been the subject of a steady stream of water transfer proposals since 1991," Rosenberg said.

The loss of the county's ground water due to such transfers could result in a number of negative effects, including trouble meeting future needs and land subsidence.

Subsidence, or a lowering of the ground water table, has potentially negative impacts. For one, if flood control levees lower, they could become less effective.

Earlier this year, the state Department of Water Resources issued a draft proposal to transfer supplemental water from mostly Sacramento Valley users to State Water Project contractors in Central and Southern California. Yolo County was among those that would have been impacted.

But the concerns of local officials were heeded by the state and it deleted the ground water substitution proposal from its draft EIR, virtually removing Yolo County from that proposal. Yolo continues to be at risk, however, he said.

In his concluding comments, Rosenberg made the following suggestions:

■ The state should have a policy that water supply needs should not be met by transferring water from one water-deficient area to another water-deficient area;

■ Water supply needs have to be met by a priority system of transfers in which water is first transferred from sources that are least likely to have environmental and economic impacts; and

■ Ground water substitution transfers should be pursued only under the following circumstances: the transfer program is limited to a specific geographic area to facilitate evaluation and mitigation of impacts; it is held accountable by locally elected officials who are accountable to the community, it results in a clear benefit; it does not include land fallowing or crop shifting; and it includes careful monitoring of impacts and provisions for prompt compensation of impacts.