

Prog.

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Issues



## M e m o r a n d u m

Date: August 6, 1997

To: CALFED Policy Group

From: Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director

Subject: Program Schedule Issues



### Summary

CALFED has established a firm Phase II completion date of November 1998 (final Record of Decision). This requires a preliminary FEIR/S in May of 1998 and the final EIR/EIS in August of 1998. These end dates established at the beginning of the Program have not been modified and are not expected to change. However, various interim steps have been modified or are under consideration for modification in order to keep the agencies and stakeholders engaged to achieve the final decision on time. As we have discussed previously, the Program consists of several parallel processes which in other programs might be conducted sequentially. These processes include impact analysis, prefeasibility studies, 404(b)(1) analysis, HCP development, and implementation strategies. Each process provides information on a specific timeline which is useful and, in some cases, essential to the alternative evaluation process.

At the July 2, 1997 Policy Group meeting, the prospect of shifting a draft EIR/EIS release from November 1997 to January 1998 was discussed and raised concern on the part of a number of CALFED agencies. The factors that affect this shift include the level of detail desired in the draft preferred alternative package, the timing of data to support that level of detail, the need to integrate other activities (HCP), the preparedness of CALFED agencies to make the decision and participate in refinement between draft and final, and disposition of the stakeholder community to receive the draft. These issues and factors should be discussed at the August 14 meeting in order to provide guidance on a timing strategy for release of the public draft EIR/EIS (this item is related to agenda item A4, also contained in this packet).

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**CALFED Agencies**

**California** The Resources Agency  
Department of Fish and Game  
Department of Water Resources  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
State Water Resources Control Board

**Federal** Environmental Protection Agency  
Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Department of Commerce  
National Marine Fisheries Service

### **Action Item**

The CALFED Policy Group should discuss the issues which affect and are affected by release of the public draft EIR/EIS and provide guidance to the Program regarding a November or January release target. The staff assessment is that given the level of detail necessary to address agency concerns arising during the alternative evaluation and screening process (i.e., a level of detail beyond classic programmatic detail), a January 1998 target is necessary. Making this adjustment, however, necessitates that the CALFED agencies commit to actions which will minimize subsequent incremental delays. These actions include:

1. Appointment of an interagency legal team to prepare the necessary documents to release the public draft EIR/EIS. Our experience with a joint letter releasing the Phase I report and preparation of materials for the Accord extension indicate that such efforts can be time consuming and if not initiated well in advance could result in delays.
2. CALFED agencies (especially lead and co-lead agencies) must commit the staff resources necessary to track the alternative evaluation process leading to the draft, and perhaps ultimately more important, to responding to comments and revising the draft in order to maintain the Phase II completion deadline.
3. Designation of the Management Group (or a lead agency/co-lead agency subset) to begin working on the basic structure of a draft preferred alternative (this overlaps with agenda item A4). The intent is not to select the specific components, but rather provide guidance on the overall structure of an alternative as the evaluation process proceeds.

### **Detailed Report**

One of the key issues as summarized above is the level of detail desired in the draft preferred alternative. As we have discussed previously, there seems to be little interest within the stakeholder community or the CALFED agencies in releasing an alternative at a classic programmatic level, but rather to be able to define the alternative in more detail. As an example, an alternative could be defined as including up to 3 million acre feet of storage in the Sacramento Valley and all potential storage sites would still be under consideration. However, stakeholders and agencies want to see the amount of storage narrowed and more specifically defined (e.g., 1-1.5 million acre feet), want to see the potential storage sites that will be considered to meet that level of storage narrowed so that judgments can be made about the viability and impact of the storage under consideration, and want to see more refined model studies. Attachment 1 provides an example of the source and timing of information that will be available to help detail and evaluate the alternatives. Staff will

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discuss the level of detail of various information sets, timing of the information, and the integration of the information sets to address Program issues to further illustrate the concepts contained in the attachment. Staff will also discuss how the difference in availability of these information sets between the November and January time frames will influence the level of understanding that CALFED agencies will have of the alternatives and the consequent level of comfort with the decisions being made in the respective months.

Attachment