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SACRAMENTO--The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program was released today for public review and comment. The 75 day comment period will end on Monday, June 1, 1998.

"This is a tremendous step forward in the way we manage our precious natural resources," said Governor Pete Wilson. "But we're not there yet. During the next few months it will be critical that all Californians let their views be known about the choices we have before us."

CALFED, a Federal-State partnership, has been developing a plan for the long-term solution in cooperation with environmental, urban, and agricultural interests. The programmatic draft outlines a long-term comprehensive plan to restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta System, an intricate web of waterways created at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, and the watershed that feeds them.

"CALFED is a model for the kind of state-federal partnership we need to embrace if we are to develop lasting solutions to complex environmental issues," said Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior. "The Bay-Delta is on par with the Florida Everglades and Chesapeake Bay in terms of important ecological resources. We must resolve the conflicts it faces for the good of California and the nation."

After extensive public and technical review, CALFED has identified three potential solutions, each of which comprehensively addresses the four main problems with the Bay-Delta system: ecosystem degradation, water supply reliability, water quality and levee system integrity. The main difference among the alternatives is how each would move and store water within the Bay-Delta system. The alternative with the most technical resource management advantages has been identified.

"Balancing the needs of the environment with the needs of water users is critical to California's future," said California's Secretary for Resources Doug Wheeler. "CALFED is the first truly cooperative effort to find a workable Bay-Delta system compromise that benefits all interests in an equitable manner."

"California's leading agricultural, environmental and urban interests have worked very hard to develop a durable Bay-Delta solution," said Carol M. Browner, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "People

DRAFT

are finally starting to realize that the solution starts with a healthy environment--that is the foundation of a lasting solution."

"The collaborative, comprehensive approach taken by CALFED is the best hope for crafting a solution that meets California's environmental and economic needs," said Peter Rooney, Secretary for the California Environmental Protection Agency.

"California's trillion dollar economy depends on a healthy environment and a safe, reliable and adequate water supply. You can't have one without the other," said Commerce Secretary William Daley.

The draft environmental report and its twelve appendices consist of more than 3,500 pages of technical information, various studies and analyses, and related information. (See last page of release for ordering information). For those who want to see detailed information without the technical appendices, CALFED's Phase II Report documents CALFED's work during Phase I, including underlying assumptions, various alternatives that were formulated, the current alternatives, and the strengths and weaknesses associated with each alternative, along with other information. This document was designed for the general reader so that everyone could provide informed, focused comment. Also available are a layperson's guide to CALFED, an executive summary, and other related materials.

An orientation session on the draft documents will be held in Sacramento on April 3 and will kick off a series of twelve public hearings throughout the state to receive comments on the draft PEIS/PEIR.

Orientation Session:

Sacramento, April 3

Public Hearings:

Ontario, April 21

Fresno, April 22

Oakland, April 23

Burbank, April 28

Bakersfield, April 29

Santa Cruz, April 30

Irvine, May 5

Walnut Grove, May 6

Redding, May 7

San Diego, May 12

Antioch/Pittsburg, May 13

Chico, May 14

DRAFT

"We've worked very hard over the past three years to come up with some feasible, affordable and equitable solutions to the Bay-Delta system conflicts," said Lester Snow, Executive Director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "Now it's up to the public to weigh in on the trade-offs we've identified and tell us what they think is important for California's future. CALFED's success is important not just for today, but for generations to come."

CALFED, a Federal-State partnership--has been developing a plan for the long-term solution in cooperation with environmental, urban, and agricultural interests. The draft represents three years of effort that commenced after the signing of the Bay-Delta Accord on December 15, 1994, which was intended to provide a reprieve from ongoing disputes over water issues for a period of three years. The Accord was recently extended for an additional year in order to provide CALFED and stakeholders the additional time needed to complete the draft and undergo environmental review.

The public provided ideas and comments which guided the development of the draft alternatives throughout the process. The draft impact analysis evaluates systemwide impacts of the CALFED-Bay Delta Program on a range of issues including water supplies, fishery resources, vegetation and wildlife, agricultural economics and land use, recreation, and regional social and economic factors.

Selection of the preferred alternative is scheduled for late summer, with final certification of the draft in late 1998.

The complete draft PEIS/PEIR is available in hard copy. The layperson's guide, Phase II Report, and executive summary may be accessed on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's Internet site at: <http://calfed.ca.gov>, or requested in hard copy. To order material, please contact (name) at (916) 657-2666, or call (800) 700-5752. Written comments on the draft should be addressed to Mr. Lester Snow, CALFED Bay-Delta Program, 1416 9th Street, Suite 1155, Sacramento, CA 95814.

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