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Sutter County supervisors unhappy over water study

Harold Kruger
Appeal-Democrat

At 2,000 pages and 50 pounds, it's one of the most anticipated tomes in California history, and it will be released Monday.

But don't expect it to wind up on the New York Times' bestseller list.

It's the environmental study for Calfed, the partnership of 16 state and federal agencies who want to shape the future of California water policy to improve the delta and San Francisco Bay.

Sutter County supervisors were briefed Tuesday night on the latest version of "War and Peace."

They weren't happy.

"I don't see there will be a whole lot for Northern California that they will be getting out of this," said Supervisor Casey Kroon. "We're going into battle - not to win - but what part of my body won't get cut."

There's plenty at stake in the Calfed process for Northern California, which will supply the water to make the delta a better place for fish and a more pure source of water for the Bay Area and Southern California.

"If it turns out at the end it's a bad deal for Northern California, we'll aggressively oppose it," said Rich Golb of the Northern California Water Association. "We won't go along just because we've been a participant. We have no qualms saying it's a bad deal and we oppose it."

Golb said Calfed's preferred plan includes a new, downsized version of the Peripheral Canal, plus plenty of goodies to aid the delta's water quality, ecosystem and levee system.

He said the bill to achieve the Calfed goals could approach \$9 billion just in capital costs.

"There is no way we can produce this plan without raising taxes in some form," Golb said.

The Calfed process also holds out the hope of new off-stream dams in the Sacramento Valley that could provide flood control along with increased water supplies.

"A sore subject with us is water that goes to Southern California with nothing to restore and rebuild our levees," said Supervisor Dick Akin. "Perhaps this is something that could come through the Calfed process."

Still, Akin was skeptical of Calfed.

"It's very necessary for us to participate, not so much because we believe in it but to protect our area of origin rights," Akin said. "In the discussion with people on the Calfed board, the area of origin continues to come up, and it's something that's always mentioned."

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