

# Nature of Decision



## Memorandum

Date: May 29, 1998

To: CALFED Policy Group

From: Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director *K. Havel for Snow*

Subject: Nature of Decision/Selecting a Preferred Alternative

### Summary

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is evaluating three programmatic alternatives for solving the problems in the Bay-Delta system. It is likely that the selected alternative will be staged over the 30-year implementation period due to the large scope, the wide range of funding options, legislative, regulatory, and institutional changes required, and the need to gather scientific information to guide future adaptive management actions. The staged implementation must be designed with appropriate linkages between different aspects of the Program to assure equity and stability over time.

During the June 4-5 meeting, the CALFED Policy Group will consider a straw proposal, including early implementation actions, an implementation schedule and potential linkages. The attached material summarizes the example Stage 1 Implementation Actions. Stage 1 is defined as the period of time prior to issuance of permits for construction of major new reservoirs or Delta conveyance facilities.

### Detailed Discussion

The nature of the programmatic decision could range from making a single programmatic decision on components to implement to an agreement to stage component implementation decisions over a number of years, with a process for appropriate information input (see diagram on top of attachment). In its May 1, 1998 meeting, the Policy Group concluded that the programmatic decision should be intermediate between these two extremes (see diagram on bottom of attachment).

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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

Ultimately, the decision on a preferred alternative will be defined by its many features (i.e., decision elements) such as:

- the specific proposed actions,
- implementation schedule,
- linkages,
- institutional arrangements,
- contingency response plans, and
- financing arrangements agreed upon by the Policy Group.

In the May 21, 1998 CALFED Management Team meeting, staff suggested that the most efficient approach to defining these decision elements would be through the development of a straw proposal, rather than by starting with a wide range of possible actions for considerations. The straw proposal could then be refined and expanded with options as necessary, based on input from CALFED agencies and stakeholders. This approach was agreed to by the Management Team and will be presented at the Policy Group meeting, with the caution that the straw proposal should be carefully characterized as such, rather than as a definite decision document.

The level of detail in defining these decision elements is expected to increase over time, and needs to be sufficient to support the unfolding consensus decision process. During the Management Team meeting considerable discussion was devoted to decision points, referred to as on-ramps and off-ramps.

The on-ramp concept assumes that a particular action will not occur unless specific conditions are met. For example, an on-ramp for conjunctive use of groundwater resources in a particular region would rule out more intensive use of groundwater resources unless baseline monitoring, groundwater modeling, and pilot testing all demonstrate that unmitigable impacts will not occur.

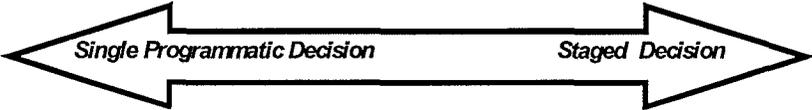
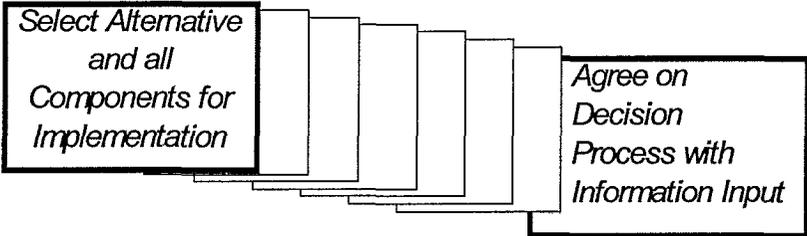
The off-ramp concept assumes that a particular action will occur unless specific conditions are met. For example, an off-ramp for long-term levee maintenance would make available subventions funding and management resources for such a program unless the legislature specifically modified its policy of protecting the current configuration of the Delta and consequently reduced funding and resources.

### **Action Required**

At the June 4-5 Policy Group meeting staff will be seeking guidance in developing example early implementation actions, an implementation schedule, and linkages. In subsequent meetings the other decision elements will also be brought up for discussion. Feedback provided by the Policy Group will guide the development of the Implementation Plan and decision support documents that will accompany the final environmental documentation.

Attachment

# Potential Range Nature of Decision



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