

# **DRAFT**

## **South Delta Improvements Issues**

1/12/99

### **Recommendations**

CALFED staff is seeking policy concurrence from the CALFED Policy Group on prioritizing and scheduling Stage 1 actions proposed to improve conditions in the south Delta Region. The specific proposals are as follows:

- Expedite implementation of the Tracy Experimental Fish Facility;
- For Stage 1 of Program implementation, plan to develop separate, best available technology screened intakes for the CVP and SWP to allow for rapid implementation, maximum operational flexibility, and optimization of facilities performance through experimental development of key features.
- Prepare a single supplement to the 1996 Draft ISDP EIR/EIS which will include both actions to achieve a permitted short term SWP export capacity of 8,500 cfs throughout the year (when conditions warrant) as well as actions to achieve a long-term capacity of 10,300 cfs. Plan to prepare the final ISDP EIR/EIS as a tiered document, to be released immediately after completion of the CALFED Record of Decision.
- Expedite the environmental review and permit process for the Joint Point of Diversion proposal, including the flexibility to exceed current permitted export rates, when conditions are appropriate.
- Conduct feasibility studies on potential interties between the SWP and CVP facilities, at the export facilities and downstream. Move forward with environmental documentation if these feasibility studies appear promising, as long as this does not retard progress on the other actions.

### **CALFED Implementation Strategy**

There is general concurrence among CALFED agencies and stakeholders that the fisheries, water quality, and water supply problems facing the south Delta are in urgent need of resolution, and therefore actions to correct these problems should be expedited to the extent feasible. In addition, there is general agreement that we are far from possessing a full understanding of these problems, their causes, and their solutions. Therefore our solution strategy should emphasize

operational flexibility, adaptive management, and testing proposed facilities at the appropriate scale before full implementation. In order to achieve CALFED's ambitious goals in the near term, we should build on existing efforts where appropriate, rather than scrapping them in favor of entirely new initiatives.

### ***Interrelated Planning Efforts***

There are currently three project level efforts underway for the south Delta study area to improve fisheries, water quality, operational flexibility, and water supply reliability. The proposed actions involved in these three efforts have all been generally considered in the CALFED Draft Programmatic EIR/EIS and included in the Stage 1 Implementation Actions list. These efforts need to be appropriately coordinated to assure that they are compatible, that environmental documentation is completed in a timely manner, and that they are implemented at the appropriate time in Stage 1 of implementation. They are:

- Tracy Experimental Fish Facility (USBR);
- Interim South Delta Program (DWR and USBR);
- Joint Point of Diversion (SWRCB); and
- Physical intertie between the the SWP and CVP systems, either behind the fish screens at the respective pumping plants of the projects, or downstream, between the export canals (USBR and DWR).

### ***Tracy Experimental Fish Facility***

One of the major unresolved issues facing the south Delta export facilities is whether and how to reduce fish losses. The main options under consideration are to:

- Replace the Tracy Fish Facility screens and construct new screens for the proposed new intake structure for Clifton Court Forebay; and
- Consolidate both CVP and SWP diversions by closing the Tracy Fish Facility and taking all exports through a larger screened intake in Clifton Court Forebay. This approach would also require construction of an intertie between the two intakes.

The aging CVP intake screen facility near Tracy (Tracy Fish Facility) has major operational and structural problems which result in unacceptably high fish losses (Attachment 1). The facility needs to be substantially upgraded or replaced. The CALFED Interagency Fish Facilities Technical Team concluded in its July 28, 1997 report that additional information is needed in order to design new fish screening and salvage facilities for the Tracy Fish Facility.

There is a current effort by the USBR to develop a 2500 cfs capacity test facility at Tracy designed to address a number of thorny fish screening, fish handling, and debris management issues. The proposed plan, documented in a November 13, 1998 draft feasibility report, provides

a potential avenue for moving forward quickly to develop solutions to these issues. If successful in resolving these issues, the facility could then go on line and screen between 50% to 100% of CVP exports, depending on the appropriate approach velocity. It could also serve as the basis for design of an additional module at the Tracy Facility, as well as design of screens for the proposed new intake to Clifton Court Forebay.

However, implementation of the plan would entail a very significant capital investment at the existing intake location, with the risk that this investment would ultimately be a stranded cost if diversions are ultimately consolidated.

In accordance with CALFED's implementation strategy outlined earlier, staff recommends that the CALFED Policy Group fully support current efforts to move forward with the Tracy Experimental Fish Facility. Although, as noted above, there is a risk of stranded costs with this approach, it is the staff judgment that this risk is far outweighed by the opportunity to move forward expeditiously with the experimental work with its the potential for near-term improvement in fish survival at the Tracy Fish Facility, the operational flexibility afforded by maintaining two diversion points, and the opportunity to use experimental results to improve CCFB intake design and other diversions in the south Delta. Staff is seeking the concurrence of the CALFED Policy Group to expedite this project.

Environmental Documentation for this program element does not need to tier off of the CALFED Programmatic EIR/EIS because there would be no change in CVP export capacity, construction effects would be highly localized at the existing facility, and the anticipated operational effects of the program would be a reduction in fish mortality.

### ***Interim South Delta Program***

CALFED has convened a series of interagency meetings to resolve remaining technical, policy, and procedural issues in order to expedite the completion of improvements necessary to allow full use of the SWP Delta Pumping Plant export pumping capacity (10,300 cfs). CALFED agencies have agreed that achieving this export capacity, while addressing all outstanding impact concerns, is a very high priority because the operational flexibility this provides will be the key to meeting both environmental and water user needs during Stage 1 of the CALFED Program implementation. Implementation of the Environmental Water Account management approach, in particular, depends upon the additional operational flexibility provided by increased export capacity.

CALFED staff proposed that the effort to address south Delta fisheries, water quality, and water supply problems be broken down into three substages, as follows:

1. Take steps to permit the SWP Delta Pumping Plant to operate at up to 8,500 cfs throughout the year when hydraulic fisheries, and water quality conditions warrant, (it is currently limited to 6680 cfs, except from mid-December until mid-March, when total

allowable exports can be increased by 1/3 of the San Joaquin River flow over 1,000 cfs. Although there is no defined upper limit, the practical limit for extended pumping is about 8,500 cfs, with exports constrained by channel and gate hydraulics. This would likely entail completion of NEPA/CEQA documentation, completion of ESA/CESA consultation, a Department of the Army (404) permit, and extension of the temporary barriers program for several more years.

2. Take steps to permit the SWP Delta Pumping Plant to operate at 10,300 cfs throughout the year when hydraulic, fisheries, and water quality conditions in the Delta warrant. This will likely entail a new screened intake to Clifton Court Forebay, limited channel enlargement in south Delta channel, a fish barrier at the Head of Old River, and methods to address local stage, circulation, and water quality concerns associated with SWP and CVP export operations. This would likely entail completion of NEPA/CEQA documentation, completion of ESA/CESA consultation, a Department of the Army (404) permit, and construction of the requisite facilities.
3. Explore long-term opportunities for relocating the SWP and CVP intakes to reduce impacts of diversions by relocating the diversion locations to alternative sites along the lower San Joaquin River and elsewhere. It was agreed that this would be a long-term effort which should be deferred until the more immediate issues are addressed. In addition, the CALFED DEFT Team has considered and rejected the concept of relocating diversions to the central Delta region due to the potential for greater fishery impacts on delta smelt and migrating salmon.

Alternative ways to meet the environmental documentation needs for these sub-stages were explored in the interagency meeting on December 7, 1998. The group recommended that DWR should prepare a draft supplement to its 1996 draft Interim South Delta Program EIR/EIS to analyze the potential impacts of pumping up to 8,500 cfs throughout the year when conditions warrant. A final EIR/EIS could then be completed in late 1999 with the supplemental information included.

Subsequent to completion of the CALFED Programmatic EIR/EIS, DWR would then prepare a second supplement to the 1996 draft Interim South Delta Program addressing new planning assumptions and new facilities, such as fish screens at the intake gates, which were not included in the 1996 draft. As soon as possible after the CALFED Programmatic EIR/EIS, DWR would complete the ISDP EIR/EIS, permits, design, and construction of requisite facilities.

In the December 8 Quinn/Spear meeting this two-step approach was questioned because it potentially delayed the progress on facilities needed to achieve the 10,300 cfs export capacity. The recommendation from this group was that both the documentation required to achieve 8,500 cfs and 10,300 cfs should be incorporated into a draft single supplement, to be released in 1999, with the final ISDP EIR/EIS tiered off of the CALFED Programmatic EIR/EIS and released immediately after the CALFED Record of Decision.

CALFED staff concurs with the Quinn/Spear recommendation because it is likely to cause minimal delay in implementing the 8,500 cfs export capacity proposal, while likely expediting implementation of the 10,300 cfs export capacity. Staff is seeking confirmation of the direction provided in the December 8 Quinn/Spear meeting prior to moving forward with scheduling and resource allocations for the ISDP completion effort.

### ***Joint Point of Diversion and Physical Interties***

The three options for integrating CVP and SWP exports offer potential improvements in operational flexibility leading to subsequent improvements in fishery protections, water quality, and water supply. The additional flexibility could also lead to further impacts to the Bay-Delta ecosystem if not appropriately managed, hence the need for detailed evaluation. The environmental review and permit process for the Joint Point of Diversion proposal, is currently being conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board. USBR has recently petitioned the Board to consider including the flexibility to exceed current permitted export rates when conditions warrant. This evaluation should be expedited.

DWR and USBR may also conduct feasibility studies on potential interties between the SWP and CVP facilities, at the export facilities and downstream. Environmental documentation for these proposals should move forward if these feasibility studies appear promising, as long as this does not retard progress on the other actions.