

# **South Delta/Lower San Joaquin Actions**



## Memorandum

Date: August 4, 1999

To: CALFED Policy Group

From: Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director

Subject: Implementation Planning for the Lower San Joaquin River and South Delta Bundle

### Summary

A draft implementation plan for the Lower San Joaquin River and South Delta Bundle has been prepared. Although very preliminary at this point, it documents a proposed framework for advancing project-level implementation for the highest priority actions within the bundle. Staff has focused particular attention on:

- Resuming/initiating project level planning for south Delta facilities required to achieve the flexibility to use the SWP full export capacity for ecosystem and water supply reliability benefits;
- Ecosystem restoration actions required to advance regional ecosystem restoration goals and balance the additional export capacity; and
- Advancing environmental documentation, design, and construction documentation for a 500 cfs Tracy Test Fish Facility.

Planning for other projects to improve water quality and water management in the region is also underway.

Timely commitments of funds, appropriate staff, and other CALFED agency resources will be needed to advance these planning efforts beyond the current preliminary levels. In addition, CALFED agencies will need to carefully establish policy guidelines for linkages between individual projects, which are designed to collectively implement CALFED's broad goals and objectives.

### Detailed Discussion

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is currently nearing completion of the programmatic planning phase, which will culminate with release of a final Programmatic EIS/EIR and a Record of Decision and certification. This will set the stage for Program implementation, which will require the completion of project-specific environmental documentation for discrete sets of related actions, tiered off of the PEIS/EIR.

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#### CALFED Agencies

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

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

Department of Agriculture  
 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 U.S. Forest Service  
 Department of Commerce  
 National Marine Fisheries Service  
 Western Area Power Administration

Program implementation will be guided by the implementation plan. The plan focuses on the early years of implementation when needed actions are better known, but also reflects a long-term vision for continuing implementation over the next several decades. Implementation will take place in stages, which allows for periodic assessment of success and balance in the program, with opportunities to alter direction and focus as necessary. Proposed actions for Stage 1 of implementation, which is expected to last about 7 years, have been compiled from extensive input from CALFED agencies and stakeholders. They were first circulated for broad public review and comment as part of the Revised Phase II Report, December 18, 1998.

Stage 1 actions were grouped into bundles for the purposes of:

- achieving regional and programmatic balance
- development of environmental documentation
- establishing Program assurances
- facilitating financing
- permitting
- implementation

The proposed bundles were made available for public review and comment since March 1999 through BDAC, CALFED's web site, and as part of the Draft PEIR/EIS released for public review and comment in June, 1999.

Among the 7 bundles proposed by CALFED is a bundle of actions for the lower San Joaquin River and south Delta region to address long-standing concerns with respect to water quality, fisheries, wildlife habitat, and water supply availability.

In order to expedite Program implementation, it is necessary to initiate the project-specific planning process well ahead of the completion of Phase II of the program. Appropriate agency staffing, budgeting, and other resources need to be identified and allocated, and formal environmental documentation needs to be initiated for the highest priority actions. The purpose of this document is to advance this early implementation planning process for the lower San Joaquin River and south Delta region. The plan suggests an approach for organizing actions into projects and defining their geographic and topical scope. It also proposes implementation responsibilities for the various CALFED agencies and stakeholder groups, identifies funding requirements, and lays out proposed implementation schedules.

In this report, actions included for the lower San Joaquin River and south Delta region bundle are grouped into 12 distinct projects, ranging from feasibility studies to full EIR/EIS' as shown in Table 1. An overview of the organization is provided in Figure 1; more detail is provided in the descriptions for each project. An overview of the implementation schedule for the entire bundle is provided in Figure 2.

The proposed grouping of actions into discrete projects reflects consideration of project purposes, the expertise and statutory mandates of the various CALFED and local agencies, and the need to create manageable project teams. There is no one correct way to organize this work; it is anticipated that the scope and structure of the proposed projects will be modified as detailed

planning gets underway in close coordination with the affected agencies and stakeholders.

CALFED has recognized the great importance of maintaining close coordination and linkages between various actions to assure balance, efficiency, harmony among various interest groups. By proposing to implement Program actions as a series of discrete projects, rather than a single comprehensive project, CALFED risks losing the very coordination and linkage so important to overall success. At the same time, it is clear from a practical standpoint that project level planning must be broken into manageable units in order to move forward. Therefore, while striking this balance between very large integrated projects and smaller, discrete projects, CALFED must give a great deal of attention to providing the appropriate linkages between individual projects.

Some of the required linkages are already in place as part of the interim Program structure. Policy Group meetings, BDAC meetings, and a large number of stakeholder/agency meetings provide useful venues for communication and coordination on implementation issues. The current budget processes, including federal, state, and local levels, provide further opportunities for coordination and negotiation to achieve a reasonable balance between competing priorities. In addition, existing laws and regulations provide a framework for agency decisions, which can create strong linkages expressed in terms of permit decisions and other actions.

However, additional linkage and assurance mechanisms need to be carefully considered on a case by case basis to assure all agencies and stakeholders that the appropriate balance and coordination will be achieved. Potential additional linkage mechanisms under consideration include contracts, legislation (including bond measures), interagency agreements, and agency directives. CALFED is committed to exploring and implementing the appropriate linkage mechanisms to assure Program integration as implementation proceeds.

#### **Action**

**Concurrence Item:** CALFED staff is seeking Policy Group concurrence with the general implementation approach proposed in the attached draft report. This includes concurrence with the priorities suggested by the proposed projects, the proposed grouping of actions within specific projects (recognizing that refinements will be ongoing as these projects get underway), and concurrence with staff efforts to initiate the project-level environmental documentation process at this time, consistent with the programmatic environmental documentation currently underway. With Policy Group concurrence staff will continue to advance the grouping the proposed actions