

Some Public Comments Received Regarding the CALFED Preferred Program Alternative and Abbreviated Suggested Responses.

Programmatic Decision

Comment: Some comments reflected concern that the CALFED alternatives and analysis lack sufficient detail to make a decision.

Response: The analysis presented in the documents are intended to support the selection of a preferred program alternative at the general planning level, rather than the selection of specific actions. Before approving implementing actions with potential environmental impacts, additional, more detailed, studies and analysis will take place.

Water Conservation

Comment: Comments focused on water conservation as the only and best means of addressing the water situation in California and that other water management methods would not be necessary if water conservation was carried out.

Response: Water conservation alone does not adequately address all of the Bay-Delta problems that CALFED is trying to resolve. Water conservation is an integral part of the CALFED solution but, is only one of a number of water management tools that will be necessary to meet CALFED's multiple objectives.

Ecosystem Restoration Efforts

Comment: Comments stated support of the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration efforts while not supporting other portions of the CALFED program.

Response: The four problem areas (ecosystem quality, water quality, water supply reliability and levee system integrity) are interrelated. Addressing Ecosystem Restoration alone is unlikely to succeed in a long-term, sustainable solution. Many past attempts to improve a single problem have achieved limited success because solutions were too narrowly focused.

Water Storage in the CALFED Program

Comment: Comments suggested that the preferred program alternative should/should not include surface storage.

Response: Groundwater and/or off-stream surface water storage will be developed and constructed, together with aggressive implementation of water conservation, recycling, and a protective water transfer market, as appropriate to meet CALFED Program goals. During Stage 1, through the Water Management Strategy (including the Integrated Storage Investigation), CALFED will evaluate and determine the appropriate mix of surface water and groundwater storage, identify acceptable projects and initiate permitting and construction if program linkages and conditions are satisfied. Second-tier environmental documentation will be completed prior to approving any proposed storage reservoir. CALFED has not included constructing new on-stream reservoirs in the preferred program alternative.

Alternatives

Comment: Program has not looked at a broad enough range of alternatives.

Response: Beginning with Phase I, CALFED has identified and reviewed numerous actions and approaches to resolving the Bay-Delta system problems.

The process identified 100 preliminary but broad solution alternatives that eventually were refined to 31, then 20, then 12 alternatives. Many of the alternatives considered and not carried forward either had significant technical limitations or shared similar characteristics with the alternatives carried forward but which had greater adverse environmental impacts or were more costly. Finally, after many public hearings and workshops, the alternatives were further refined to the four presented in the June 1999 draft PEIS/EIR.

Comment: Preferred program alternative will not meet water quality objectives.

Response: CALFED Program goals are twofold: (1) minimize ecological, drinking water, and other water quality problems; and (2) maintain water quality once achieved. To achieve this, CALFED will improve source water quality by reducing or eliminating parameters which degrade water quality. The Program will emphasize voluntary, cooperative incentive-based efforts to improve water quality. If water quality objectives can not be achieved by implementing the preferred program, the plan includes a process to pursue additional alternatives to achieve the objectives.

Comment: Preferred program alternative will not improve water supply reliability

Response: The primary water supply reliability objective is to reduce the conflict among beneficial water uses dependent on the Bay-Delta system, improve the ability to transport water through the Bay-Delta system, and reduce the uncertainty of supplies from the Bay-Delta system. The Water Management Strategy offers a series of actions, i.e, water transfers, water conservation, water recycling, groundwater and surface water storage, conveyance, watershed management, water quality and operational strategies to meet the objective.

Water exports to Southern California should not be included in the Preferred program alternative.

Comment: Bay-Delta water exports to Southern California should not be part of the preferred program alternative either at all, or not until water conservation measures are implemented in Southern California.

Response: No single water management tool or CALFED Program element can adequately address all the Bay-Delta system needs. The CALFED Program is focusing on reducing the impacts of water diversions rather than focusing on reducing the volume or changing the destination of Bay-Delta water exports.

Isolated Facility/Peripheral Canal

Comment: An isolated facility/peripheral canal should/should not be part of the preferred program alternative.

Response: An isolated facility is not part of the CALFED preferred program alternative. The CALFED agencies propose to begin with through Delta modifications. In the event the through Delta conveyance facilities in the preferred program alternative cannot meet the Program objectives particularly for water quality and fisheries, the preferred program alternative includes a process for determining the conditions under which any future additional conveyance facility actions, including those in Alternative 3, would be taken. Until additional information is available to determine whether water quality objectives and fish recovery goals can be met and which if any additional actions will be necessary to achieve the Program goals and objectives, the preferred program alternative is the best alternative to achieve overall project purposes/objectives.