Draft
BDAC ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION WORK GROUP
Meeting Summary
October 24, 1996

The seventh meeting of the BDAC Ecosystem Restoration Work Group was held on Thursday, October 24, 1996 at the Resources Building from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm.

BDAC members of the Work Group present were:

Mary Selkirk (Chair)
Tib Belza
Ann Notthoff

Invited participants to the Work Group were:

Pete Chadwick
Jeff Jaraczeski
Sally Shanks
Pete Rhoads
Frank Wernette
Kate Hansel

CALFED Staff/Consultants present were:

Lester Snow
Dick Daniel
Sharon Gross
Michelle Wong
Eugenia Laychak

Other Attendees:

Anthony Barkett
John Coburn
Gilbert Cosio
Tim Ford
Nathan French
Lance Johnson
Steve Kellogg
Walter Kornichuk
Jordan Lang
Jim Martin
John Mills
Hari Modi
Kent Nelson
Jeff Phipps
Larry Puckett
Tim Ramirez
Robin Reynolds
Dean Ruiz
Bob Shaffer
Steve Sinnock
Rick Sitts
Martha Turner
Greg Wang
Scott Wilcox

Mary Selkirk introduced the meeting and presented the agenda. The primary objective for the meeting was to discuss the target setting process. The Ecosystem Restoration Targets Workshop has been rescheduled to November 19th (from October 31st). A Workshop on indicators will be scheduled in late fall.

Lester Snow described the Phase II process with a graphic which summarized the steps in the Phase II process. Step 1 is component refinement, step 2 focuses on the linkages among the components, step 3 details operations and benefit/costs of alternatives, step 4 analyzes the impacts of alternatives, step 5 is preparation of the draft EIR/EIS, and step 6 is preparation of the final EIR/EIS. The Phase III process consists of the project level environmental analyses. CALFED is currently in the process of reevaluating the overall Program schedule.

Assessment and Discussion of Ecosystem Restoration Program

Dick Daniel summarized the process for development of the Ecosystem Restoration Common Program, which evolves from stating the problems to defining objectives, then developing goals for objectives, targets for goals, and actions for targets. Products expected include the Goals and Targets Report to be distributed at the workshop in November, the Implementation Strategy to be completed later this winter, and the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP). The ERPP has all of the elements of the common program including goals, targets, and actions. An ERPP workshop is planned for late January. The intent is to describe benefits and impacts of the Program in the EIR/EIS at that point. Upon completion of the EIR/EIS in the fall of 1998, CALFED will begin Phase III by implementing actions. The ERPP is expected to continually be revised during Phase III.

In response to a question on assurances and the role of watershed conservancies, Dick reiterated CALFED's intention to involve conservancies throughout the process possibly through an HCP process (Section 10 of the ESA). In the Delta, permits would likely be issued to the government agencies through a Section 7 Consultation process.

There was a suggestion that decision points should be added through the process, especially after the NEPA/CEQA process, and that there should be links in the decision process with the environmental documentation.

In response to the impatience of getting to specifics, Dick stated that it cannot be done in Phase II. The actions would be more in the line of concepts to meet targets, and targets would be ranges only. Some also expressed concern about the lack of consideration of the social-economic effects in the plan development process, and the ability to effectively analyze and consider such effects if they are not considered until preparation of the EIR/EIS. Lester responded that CALFED cannot define community impacts except at a general level in the programmatic EIR/EIS. There will be more

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community meetings during the EIR/EIS and the Phase III process where more detailed scoping will occur.

A question was asked about efforts to reach out for input on the ERPP. Dick related plans for public workshops and technical meetings where stakeholders and various technical experts with knowledge on specific resources or ecological zones would be involved. Concern was also expressed about the limited amount of time built-in to comment and response to comments on the ERPP. Dick responded by reiterating the scheduled period of reaching out to stakeholders from November through January, plus a 45-50 day period for comment on the draft ERPP. Also, there will be an annual planning, review, and adjustment process once the ERPP is implemented.

Schedule of ERPP - Dick Daniel

A draft of the ERPP should be available for distribution by January 14, followed by a workshop on January 28th.

Definitions - Dick Daniel

Dick Daniel distributed a handout on key definitions for terms such as goals, targets, actions, objectives, and vision. Mary Selkirk added that goals will be long term and fixed, while targets could be short or long term and could change. Visions are what we hope to accomplish. Dick stated that some goals do not have targets as yet, because it is difficult to prescribe quantitative targets for some goals (e.g. San Joaquin River meander belt). "Ecological Indicator" is a tool for assessing ecosystem health, summing up the effects of an array of actions into a single response parameter that is a measure of health. Some commented that indicators should be considered in the goal setting process, not just in the evaluation process later in the Program. Indicators will be a battleground as they are where success is defined. There was a suggestion to tie goals to specific indicators. There were several comments on the need for common, consistent, and specific definitions and the need to facilitate early buy-in on definitions.

Geographic Scope - Dick Daniel

Dick Daniel described the geographic scope of the ERPP as depicted in CALFED's map of the primary and secondary focus areas. The primary focus area includes the North Bay and areas outside the Bay-Delta because of CALFED's policy of expanding the solution scope area. The map also shows key ecozones. Upper watersheds above the dams are not in the focus area. The Program will limit activities to watershed management practices in these areas. In all areas the CALFED plan will provide seamless linkages with existing restoration programs. Lester added that upper watershed management was not being considered earlier in the Program. Stakeholder interest made CALFED consider it. The upper watersheds programs will evolve differently in a

different institutional forum.

Aquatic Goals and Targets - Terry Mills

Terry Mills described the goal/target setting process and provided some examples of goals and targets. He stated the process focuses from the top down by first restoring key physical processes and stressors and only then toward direct restoration of habitats and species. He considers this a unique approach, at least in the Central Valley where restoration has worked in the opposite direction in the past, starting with species and habitats. CALFED will restore key physical processes and stressors first. If this is envisioned as not being adequate to meet goals, then focus will be exerted on habitats and functions. If these fail to meet goals also, then the restoration program may move toward direct support of species through such actions as harvest management or hatcheries.

Terry then described the outline of a vision example - the American River. Because the American River is greatly perturbed with dams and levees, and used for water supply and flood control, there is limited restoration potential through key physical processes. Thus, the American River vision is to do as much as we can through habitat and species. Two members of the work group questioned whether CALFED should accept the existing situation as a given. Dick Daniel described the paradox of large woody debris - it is important habitat for fish, yet it is removed since it is a hazard for recreational boaters.

A question was raised about how priorities would be set for implementing actions, given the complexity of the ERPP involving potentially hundreds of actions. Terry responded by stating that there are many existing programs from which we can derive priorities and draw actions.

Some emphasized that since targets and actions are not fixed, assurances will be the glue of the restoration program and indicator monitoring would provide feedback as to progress and success. For key resources in which goals, targets, and actions have considerable technical uncertainty, restoration plans should address the uncertainty through emphasis on adaptive management and testing. Also, the ERPP needs to highlight baseline restoration programs, especially in the ecozone visions by watershed.

North Delta Ecozone Example - Frank Wernette

Frank Wernette presented an example of goals and targets for the North Delta. Concern was expressed that goals, targets, actions, and visions for many resources would overlap in coverage. Frank acknowledged that this was expected and necessary to provide a complete view from whatever perspective a reader of the plan may have.

A concern was expressed about targets for conversion of agricultural lands in the Delta. Managed agricultural lands may provide far more benefits to waterfowl and wildlife than natural wetlands. Even with willing sellers, conversion of managed wetlands and agricultural lands to tidal wetlands would be considered a taking of important resources that would have to be dealt with in the CEQA process. Dick Daniel responded by stating the need to build a mosaic of habitats including managed wetlands and agricultural lands, along with natural tidal wetlands in the Delta.

Some suggested targets presented in the ERPP should be accompanied by appropriate justification/basis, including levels prescribed by ecozone visions. Basis should include science or constraints such as land use or cost/benefit. The process of change through adaptive management and use of indicators need to be clearly laid out in the implementation strategy.

Public Comment Period

A recommendation was made for CALFED to work closely with other restoration programs in developing the ERPP. Lester Snow responded by stating that CALFED will be highlighting the new policy of not only working more closely with local planning efforts, but promoting actions to be implemented at the local stakeholder conservancy level.

Questions were raised about how CALFED would deal with such mega-stressors as urbanization and operations of the SWP and CVP, and how flood control, base flows, and reservoirs would be dealt with. Lester Snow stated that these are key concerns that would be addressed in the ERPP, and in the process of integrating the components (storage, conveyance, water quality, system integrity, and ecosystem restoration). The Time-Value of Water tool would also address some of these concerns.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held on November 26th.