CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Summary of Programmatic Approach & Level of Detail

for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report/
Environmental Impact Statement

During Phase II, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (CALFED) will be preparing a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS). The use of programmatic environmental documents allows agencies to deal with broad environmental issues at the planning stages and then to provide more detailed examination of specific project level effects in subsequent specific environmental documents. This approach will allow CALFED to adopt programs, plans and policies by focusing on the "big picture" and then allow for the use of the most efficient environmental review process for subsequent individual projects which are constant with the previously adopted programs, plans, and policies. No site specific project level analysis will be conducted in the programmatic document. All future projects will require additional environmental evaluation.

Function of the Programmatic EIR/EIS

One of the primary purposes of conducting programmatic analysis in Phase II is to provide decision makers with enough information relative to the beneficial and adverse impacts of the three CALFED alternatives so that an effective decision regarding the preferred program can be made. The programmatic analysis will also identify potentially significant beneficial, detrimental and cumulative impacts and allow the development of programmatic implementation and mitigation strategies.

Primary Function of the Programmatic EIR/EIS:

To create a "general plan" as to the future approach of the program by selecting one of three programmatic alternatives as a preferred program.

Secondary Functions of the Programmatic EIR/EIS:

To disclose the general adverse and beneficial impacts upon which selection of a preferred program is based.

To provide strategies and guidance for future project level actions relative to implementation and phasing, mitigation, finance and assurances.

Program Level Actions - Level of Detail

The CALFED programmatic environmental document is intended to look at broad and general policy and program level decisions. Its function is to provide a direction rather than a prescription for the future. It is not intended to be specific as to project locations, sizes, volumes, or specific actions. A consistent programmatic level of detail will be used for each of the components within the alternatives. Program level actions will be conveyed as representative ranges or examples which capture the best and worst case scenario which might be pursued under a preferred program in Phase III. Upper and lower limits of ranges will be explained and justified so there is a common understanding as to why these limits were established.

The challenge for CALFED is to provide enough information for effective decision making at the programmatic level, while avoiding unnecessary complexity and delays in the schedule. The following are examples of a CALFED Program level action, an action which is too general to provide sufficient information, and an example of a project level action which is too specific for the programmatic evaluation.

CALFED Program Level Action

Construct a 2 million acre foot storage facility on the west side of the Sacramento River with a diversion point north of Colusa.

Too General:

Construct 1 or more storage facilities north of the Delta in a size range of 2 to 5 million acre feet.

Project Level Action - Too Specific:

Construct a 3.5 million acre foot storage facility at "Reservoir Valley" in Lake County.

Programmatic Impact Analysis

The assessment process and programmatic impact analysis for CALFED's Programmatic EIR/EIS will be used to measure and discuss changes in resource categories (such as air quality, recreation, and cultural resources), distinguish the relative differences between the alternatives, and identify adverse and beneficial impacts for each of the alternatives when compared to the No Action Alternative and existing conditions baselines.

Presentation of Results

Results from the programmatic impact analysis will be presented in both the Technical Reports for each resource category and the Programmatic EIR/EIS. The Technical Reports will be used to display the detailed results of the programmatic impact analysis. These results will be summarized, and the summaries will be presented in the Programmatic EIR/EIS.

Technical Reports

The Technical Report will identify differences between the Preferred Program and each of the alternatives when compared to the No Action Alternative and existing conditions. These Technical Reports will contain information on the specific assessment methods used, the criteria used for determining significance, presentation of direct and indirect adverse and beneficial impacts for each identified assessment variable, identification of potentially significant impacts, associated mitigation strategies for addressing significant impacts, and identification of potential significant unavoidable impacts.

Programmatic EIR/EIS

Results from the programmatic impact analysis will be summarized in the Programmatic EIR/EIS. When presenting results in the Programmatic EIR/EIS, emphasis will be placed on identifying the differences between the alternatives. The programmatic impact analysis is not intended to provide specific quantities or numbers relative to changes in resource categories, level of impact, or mitigation strategies. An effort will be made to present results in a tabular format for easy comparison and establish the potential relative magnitude of change within each resource category such as a high, medium or low level of improvement when comparing the preferred program and each of the alternatives.

Summarized results from impact analysis presented in the Programmatic EIR/EIS will be used to:

- Evaluate how well the preferred and alternative programs meet the Program goals and objectives, conform with the Program's solution principles and achieve short and long-term acceptability, and

- Identify potential improvements or degradation within each resource category for the preferred and alternative programs.