BDAC Ecosystem Restoration Work Group
Meeting Summary
March 5, 1997

The tenth meeting of the BDAC Ecosystem Work Group was held on Wednesday March 5, 1997 at the Resource Building from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

(Some attendees who arrived late and/or who did not sign in are not listed below)

BDAC Members present were:

Mary Selkirk, Chair	Tib Belza	Pat McCarty
Bob Raab		

Invited Participants of the Work Group present were:

Gary Bobker	Pete Chadwick	Pete Rhoads
Sally Shanks	Frank Wernette	Tom Zuckerman

CALFED Staff/Consultant Team present were:

Dick Daniel	Sharon Gross	Jim Martin
Martha Turner		

Other Participants included:

Bill Alsop	John Beuttler	Kimberly Curtis
Bill DuBois	Nathan French	Arthur Godwin
Michael Gutterres	Fred Hickman	Liz Howard
Linda Hunter	Lance Johnson	Steve Johnson
William Johnston	Marti Kie	John Kopchik
Heather McIntire	John Mills	Joe Miyamoto
Kent Nelson	Elizabeth Patterson	Michele Pla
Tim Ramirez	Rich Reiner	John Renning
Robin Reynolds	Nancy Schaefer	Kelly Tennis
Laureen Thompson	Philip Unger	Don Wagenet
Greg Wang	Carolyn Yale	

A draft of a document entitled *Overview: CALFED Bay-Delta Program Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan* was distributed to the Work Group at the start of the meeting.

Mary Selkirk, the Work Group chair, opened the meeting and apologized that the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP) was not available. It is a hugely complex, four-volume document and is anticipated to completed and available for distribution at the April 8 BDAC Ecosystem Restoration workshop. Mary stated that one objective for the current meeting will be to discuss and revisit ERPP comments and determine how issues have been addressed and incorporated into the document. Dick Daniels will also provide an overview of how ecosystem components will be integrated with other CALFED components.

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Overview of the ERPP

Dick updated the Work Group on the overall status of the ERPP. The document is approximately 780 pages in length and is currently undergoing in-house review and refinement. Currently, the ERPP is comprised of four documents: 1) a technical summary, 2) Volume 1 - containing discussion of habitat types, stressors, etc., 3) Volume 2 - containing presentation of details, targets, and objectives for each ecological zone (includes a suite of programmatic actions), and 4) a preliminary working draft of the monitoring program (includes indicators of health, phasing of actions, and focused research needs). Dick stated he is also considering one appendix to combine all necessary references.

Members of the Work Group were interested in when they could receive copies of the ERPP. Dick responded that the ERPP will be distributed at the April 8 workshop. This is in part because of the expense in trying to mail out the expansive document. Attempts to draft a 20-page executive summary of the ERPP by mid-March are being made. These executive summaries will be made available to Work Group members and others. Some members expressed frustration knowing a document exists but is not available for review. There is a concern on the part of stakeholders that agencies, as they internally revise a document, tend to "buy-in" to what they have written. This can make it more difficult to be open to comments and suggested changes. However, the CALFED Program staff responded that they do not want to release document without adequate internal review. There are concerns of many agencies that have to be satisfied and resolved. Internal review, at the present time, is limited to CALFED Program staff and has not included substantive agency review. A point was raised that extensive input from various agencies and stakeholders was incorporated throughout the development of this document and very little should be a surprise.

Integration with Other Components

Discussion turned to the combined benefit of habitat restoration goals and improved flood management. The ERPP discusses using setback levees to provide necessary habitat restoration. Setbacks would also provide flood management benefits. The Corps of Engineers is examining improved flood management through the use of floodways that are contiguous with rivers, as opposed to facilities like the Yolo Bypass which is detached. Such actions would integrate well with habitat restoration needed along rivers. It was suggested that CALFED may become a bridge for public disclosure and debate for the merits of various flood management alternatives.

Questions were raised as to how the process of identifying integrated opportunities was occurring. According to Dick, this is generally occurring as various CALFED Program staff discuss the types of restoration and levee rehabilitation desired and look for areas of dual benefit. These are reflected in the ERPP. There is a need to find a better way to integrate other aspects of the CALFED components into the ERPP, such as water use efficiency. For instance, too much conservation may adversely impact some aspects of ecosystem habitat. Conservation programs should consider benefits from a larger perspective.

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Dick informed the Work Group that CALFED is examining a peer review/technical review process. This program would allow for necessary and independent peer review of products and concepts. Several members stated that they felt the formation of these groups was necessary to ensure scientific credibility.

A question was raised asking if the ERPP has made any attempt at identifying where additional water needed to restore ecosystem health would be obtained. The ERPP would focus on the additional flow needed for the ecosystem, and not necessarily how that water would be obtained. It was felt that this issue is highly debatable and would need to be discussed in a separate forum. The technical review groups would be able to offer advice regarding amounts of instream flows desired for different rivers and tributaries. The CALFED Program has made a very rough estimate of how much flow may be needed on various waterways by examining historic flows and various other data sources. Programmatic level actions have been identified in the ERPP that could be used to meet estimated flow needs. In some cases desired flows are small and only needed for a short period. In other cases, flows are desired for several weeks in a row but only for particular stretches. This again is where opportunities to integrate components need to be identified, such as offstream storage combined with increased instream flows during the fall. Concern was expressed that if the goal is to reactivate natural processes, then creating flows when and where they may not have existed before is contrary to the goal. The question was also raised that if we want to reconstruct flows that may not have otherwise existed during dry periods, then are we going to accept the Delta's salinity regime that was present during droughts such as that from 1928-34? Dick responded stating that the intention is not necessarily to bring back a historic hydrograph, but rather use the information as a model to identify and recreate patterns in the hydrograph that are critical to fish populations and to hydrologic processes.

Identification of Areas of Agreement/Concern

The meeting moved to the next agenda item regarding areas of agreement and areas of concern that have been identified over the past several months, and how these have been incorporated into the current working draft of the ERPP. Several items were discussed including:

- Scope of the Program
- Land use management
- Substance of targets
- Coordination with other programs
- Flow patterns
- Hatcheries
- Numerical targets
- Magnitude of habitat restoration
- Exotic species
- Stakeholder input
- Fish screens
- Meander zones
- Harvest management

Regarding scope of the Program: Comments received have asked for both expansion and shrinkage of the current scope. The ERPP has not changed its original scope and a nexus between the lower parts of the south Bay and the Delta has yet to be determined. However, the ERPP does include areas down to and including the Petaluma River and San Pablo Bay, and upstream to watersheds above some of the dams. Also, some habitat plans have been revised because of a lack of connection between some terrestrial habitat and the Delta ecosystem health.

Regarding land use management: The ERPP does necessarily advocate large scale land use changes. Attempts have been made to accommodate and minimize these, but there is a desire to reconstruct buffer zones between agriculture and the rivers. CALFED realizes that land use issues are locally controlled but can be influenced by CALFED. Programs that develop easements and use lease-backs will help achieve the objectives while minimizing the potential impact.

Regarding substance of targets: Many stakeholders have recommended that quantifiable targets must be developed. The CALFED implementation objectives are to restore in order to reactivate and maintain ecological processes. To this end, CALFED has attempted to quantify targets for most objectives and identify programmatic level options to meet targets. There are still targets in the ERPP that do not have metrics simply because a value is not scientifically known.

Regarding coordination with other programs: CALFED understands that there are many different programs concurrently working on some of the same objectives as CALFED. The Program is committed to coordinating with these programs and looking for ways to enhance activities. In some instances, such as the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP), objectives are different. The AFRP is looking at instream flows from the narrow focus of increasing fish populations. CALFED is considering instream flows from the standpoint of restoring the health of the entire ecosystem (which includes species needs as well as ecosystem process and function needs). A question was raised with regard to the possibility of involvement of the California Academy of Sciences in a technical review role. Dick responded that CALFED is optimistic about utilizing technical review teams (discussed previously) and it was certainly an option to organize these under this organization.

Regarding hatcheries: It was acknowledged that the existing fish hatcheries were developed to offset losses of habitat from the placement of dams. However, the hatchery fish may also negatively impact the survival of native wildstocks. CALFED will be looking at ways to manage hatchery production that may include actions limiting where hatchery fish are released and limiting commercial harvest only to hatchery stocks. The ERPP is also considering artificial support of the striped bass.

Regarding numerical targets: As previously stated, the ERPP includes numerical targets for many of the objectives, however, some implementation objectives do not have numerical objectives. For instance, there is no quantity for restoration of natural gravel recruitment. We do not know how much would be needed or if it should even be done. It was suggested that objectives that do not have numerical targets be identified in the document as specifically not having values. This would help the reader to know that the number was not inadvertently left off.

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Regarding exotic species: CALFED is proposing options to manage exotic species, especially aquatic plants. A question was asked whether CALFED has identified what exotics it is targeting or if money is just being "thrown at it"? Dick responded that there are some targeted species, such as water hyacinth. However, there is also the thought that restoration of ecological processes will, in itself, support the eradication some exotic species. These exotics have established themselves in a system that has been perturbed. Restoring the natural processes may help in eliminating or diminishing the exotics. It was noted that some water hyacinth populations are currently providing a flood control benefit by buffering wind waves that strike the levees. We need to consider the benefits of any exotic prior to trying to remove them. Dick stated that the hyacinth has replaced tules that used to perform the same function. Re-establishment of tules in place of hyacinth would be part of the restoration of the natural process.

Regarding stakeholder input: Dick stated that the Program is dedicated to incorporating stakeholder input and that it is being included in the development of the ERPP. A comment was made with regard to coordination with the Ecosystem Roundtable. It would be wise, it was stated, to determine the major uncertainty issues relative to actions in the in the ERPP and forward this to the Roundtable so that they can utilize this information as they consider identification and funding of projects. Dick stated that part of the ERPP is focused on identifying areas where additional research is needed. This will also be useful to the Roundtable during their process.

Regarding flow patterns: Dick indicated that the program was examining developing new supplies of water for ecosystem uses. The intent is not to depend on the regulatory process for obtaining water.

Regarding fish screens: Targets need to be developed for fish screens. It is also important that a priority system be developed so that we can measure the results of our actions.

Regarding magnitude of targets: Concern was expressed that the magnitude of many of our targets are not sufficient to really make a difference. Dick indicated that he thought that many of these issues were addressed in the ERPP and the Program was developing a matrix that would make it easier to see the extent of the restoration activities.

Indicators

Carolyn Yale, EPA, provided a brief overview of the current efforts regarding the development of indicators for ecosystem restoration. They have drafted indicators for each of the implementation objectives and are currently reviewing them for accuracy. They hope to have a full range of indicators and measures by April 8. Gary Bobker indicated that he did not believe that there was a total overlap between the Implementation Objectives and the Indicator Framework that was developed last year. This is currently being reviewed by stakeholders who will submit recommendations to the Program of things to incorporate.

Scientific Review

Areas that were suggested would require additional technical review or peer review included adequate flow patterns and hatcheries.

Also acknowledged was the need for a larger "Blue Ribbon Panel" or technical review group to evaluate specific issues and provide guidance and scientific credibility. Dick indicated that planning for this effort was occurring and the time frame would likely be May or June.

The next meetings were set for the following dates (from 9 a.m. to noon):

- March 26, 1997
- April 30, 1997