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Lester Snow, Executive Director  
CALFED Bay-Delta Program  
1416 9th St., Suite 1155  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Lester:

We were told during our October BDAC meeting that on December 9 the BDAC will be given a preview of the preferred alternative that CALFED will announce the following week. This timing appears to preclude any advisory function by the "Advisory Council" regarding the selection of the alternative. I am, therefore, writing at this time to offer comments and suggestions in the hope that they can still be considered.

I believe there are two major controversial issues, either of which could lead to a major attack on CALFED if they are perceived to be inappropriately addressed in the preferred alternative. These issues are the peripheral canal, and any perceived inadequacy or lack of commitment to measures that are sufficient to close the gap between water supply and demand during the 30 year time frame of the plan. It would be very unfortunate to lose the benefits of CALFED because of the way these issues are addressed.

The desirability of a canal can of course always be reconsidered. However, an attack on CALFED cannot be avoided by pretending that an initially smaller canal would preserve the protection of a "common pool" or by stating that the canal would be designed but not built unless its proponents are dissatisfied with whatever through-Delta design we are permitted to design and implement. We can not prejudge that a canal will be the best and only solution to whatever problems exist in the future. We should not ignore the fact that the fishery also needs "common pool" protection; and that a canal inevitably degrades Delta water quality, involves Delta seepage problems and increased flood risks, creates a disruptive barrier across the Delta, and takes land out of production and off the county and reclamation district tax rolls.

The issue of water supply versus demand is more involved, but it is a statewide concern. My suggestions on this build on a conceptual approach that appeared to have fairly broad tentative acceptance in principle during last week's BDAC meeting. Basically the concept is to assess a plausible range of future demand for agricultural, urban, and environmental needs with present water use efficiencies, and a plausible range of potential increased water reuse and increased water use

efficiencies to reduce that demand. The remaining demand, even with optimum plausible efficiency and a minimum forecasted need, would be compared to the existing water supply to determine a probable minimum future gap between supply and demand. CALFED would then commit to making every effort to provide this minimum increase in yield to augment the overall water supply as soon as reasonably possible. CALFED would acknowledge that this increase in yield must come primarily from capturing and storing more of the water that otherwise becomes Delta outflow in excess of SWRCB standards. It would devise the most water and cost/benefit efficient combination of various types of facility, and the coordinated operation thereof, to achieve that minimum level of water yield. Additional measures to address potential upper limit of the supply/demand gap would be "off the table" until it is clear that the maximum plausible water use efficiency improvements can or can't be achieved in a technically, financially, and publicly acceptable manner. CALFED would pledge that the agricultural supplies needed to maintain the present level of production of food and fiber will not be depleted in order to meet growing urban demand or proposed environmental water supplies.

Further stipulations are needed to define the manner in which the future agricultural, urban, and environmental demand would each be determined. In regard to agriculture, the future water supply should be sufficient to avoid continued reliance on the unsustainable depletion of natural resources: that is, the reliance on long term net overdraft of groundwater should be eliminated, and any water needed to protect the salinity of soils and groundwaters by restoring and maintaining a salt balance in the Central Valley south of the Delta should be included in the ag demand; and the policy on water available for transfer should be compatible with protection of legal users of water other than the transferor, and compatible with land use policies and reservations. A high end of the forecasted range in future ag demand should at least assume that in thirty years we will be able to provide food and fiber at the current per capita level for California's future population, while also maintaining our present per capita contribution to the nation's food supply without any dependency on net foreign imports.

The upper end of the range for urban demand could either be the Bulletin 160 figure, or some other figure agreeable to urban interest groups.

The future environmental demand can be based on the CALFED environmental program, including any increase in water consumption by new wetland and other habitat, and any increase in water consumption due to conversion of farm land or idle land to wetlands and other habitat. It would also include any proposed increase in Delta outflow above the SWRCB standards.

I urge that this approach be considered and refined in order to resolve the issue over "storage" while recognizing that the

real issue is not "storage", It is the need for an increase in water supply that is sufficient to assure that urban needs and environmental needs are not met by depleting the supply of water and land needed to provide domestically produced food and fiber for the growing population.

It is my hope that these comments and suggestions can contribute to assuring a valuable future for CALFED.

Sincerely,



Alex Hildebrand

cc Sunne McPeak  
Jason Peltier  
Bill Pauli  
Steve Hall  
SDWA Board