NCWA

August 30, 1999

Ms. Wendy Halverson Martin
CALFED Bay-Delta Program Restoration Coordinator
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: FY 2000 Priorities for the Ecosystem Restoration Program

Dear Wendy:

Tomorrow, I will be participating in a tour on the Sacramento River with Department of Parks and Recreation Director Areias and Sacramento Valley farming and agency representatives. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the public workshop in Sacramento on August 31st. Please accept these comments in lieu of my attendance at this important meeting.

In the past five years, many NCWA members have initiated far-reaching efforts to screen diversions, refurbish fish ladders, construct siphons, remove dams and implement other habitat improvement projects to enhance the environment. As you know, all of the CALFED fishery agencies have acknowledged the importance and utility of screening. California's recent response to the declining spring-run salmon population is a good example of the benefit of implementing broad based restoration actions before the species is listed under federal law, and the ensuing regulatory gauntlet hampers all voluntary recovery efforts. These projects, in addition to providing environmental benefits and keeping water users "whole", also convey a positive message for the CALFED Bay-Delta program to policy makers in Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

Several proposals for CALFED assistance to screen diversions were not funded last round because of the myriad of proposals submitted and relatively limited funds available through the solicitation process. As Terry Mills noted during the June Integration Panel / Roundtable workshop, additional screen proposals worthy of funding were not selected simply because the money was not available. We recommend that CALFED prioritize those projects that impart tangible benefits, and set aside a portion of the estimated $30-$45 million in FY 2000 funding sufficient to cover small screen proposals. These proposals include the Pleasant Grove-Vernona Mutual Water Company fish screen, Butte Creek / Sanborn Slough Bifurcation Project, Tuttle Pump Relocation, Richter Brothers Anadromous Fish Screen Project, and DFG fish screen modifications for the Cordua Irrigation District and Hallwood Irrigation Company diversions.

The Northern California Water Association is encouraged by the dedicated measures undertaken by you and your staff to improve the disbursement of public funds for ecosystem restoration purposes. We look forward to our continued involvement with the Roundtable and your staff.

Sincerely,

Dan Keppen
Director of Member & Government Relations

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