BDAC Water Use Efficiency Work Group
Meeting Summary
May 23, 1996

The first meeting of the BDAC Water Use Efficiency Work Group was held on Thursday, May 23, 1996 at the Resources Building from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

BDAC members of the Work Group present were:

Judith Redmond, Chair	Richard Izmirian
Roberta Borgonovo	Mary Selkirk
Don Bransford	Mike Stearns

Invited participants of the Work Group were:

Scott Akin	Bill Jacoby
Dan Rodrigo	Palma Risler
Ed Craddock	Betsy Reifsnider
Byron Buck	

CALFED Staff present were:

Rick Soehren	Sharon Gross

Judith Redmond discussed the role of the Water Use Efficiency Work Group. This Work Group will address ways to increase efficiency of water use and thus reduce demand for water and increase flexibility in the Delta system.

General approaches to be included in the purview of the Work Group include increased urban, municipal, and agricultural water conservation efforts, and water recycling. The topic of permanent and temporary agricultural land retirement was also included because it is seen in some cases as a way of improving water quality and in other cases as a way to reduce overall demand for water. Potentially, other methods of improving water quality or reducing demand for water could be included.

Rick Soehren provided background information on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to the Work Group. Rick also provided a description of the water use efficiency components in the alternatives and the current efforts to define a common approach for Water Use Efficiency.

Rick discussed the key comments received from the scoping meetings. One of the suggestions was that water use efficiency must be strongly pursued and implemented at a vigorous level in all alternatives. Another scoping comment was that the program should include flexibility so that decisions about water use efficiency methods can be made at the local level.

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Rick also pointed out that the level of effort for the water use efficiency component must complement the conveyance and storage components of the alternatives.

The following key points and questions were raised by the members of the Work Group:

- A high degree of local flexibility in implementation of water use efficiency may result in increased reliance on water markets and decreased reliance on conservation.
- Increased water use efficiency cannot be totally voluntary; regulatory or financial incentives will be needed.
- This Work Group needs to take into consideration that improved water quality would yield more water for beneficial use without having to acquire new water source.
- How would we handle a potential deficiency when demand exceeds supply even with the implementation of water use efficiency programs? A likely option is water transfers. Let cost be the determining factor for agencies in addressing deficiencies.
- Flexibility and local control of water use efficiency must be balanced with strong guarantees.
- The water agencies may not be willing to or able to agree on a prescriptive approach, so this type of approach may be very difficult to implement. It will be easier to achieve agency buy-in if they are allowed to decide what level of implementation is achievable.
- The Work Group needs to start with basic assumptions regarding the approaches to demand management, elements included in demand management, and the level of implementation sufficient to meet various goals.
- If we are moving toward integrating the three components (conveyance, storage, and water use efficiency program) and allowing the agencies to come up with a balance, we may fall short of our goals for efficient water use.

The key issues suggested by Work Group members for each component of Water Use Efficiency were as follows:

Urban Water Use Efficiency

- Currently, when agencies are developing water savings numbers related to the urban BMPs. These numbers may be used for estimating water savings in the alternatives.
- Urban conservation may not have a significant impact on some of the alternatives.
- If we move completely away from the prescriptive approach of specifying actions and implementation levels, we may reduce the effectiveness.
- We need a better understanding on how water use efficiency is integrated with other elements of the alternatives.

Agricultural Water Use Efficiency

- Agricultural water use efficiency needs to be looked at with same level of scrutiny as the urban BMPs.

- Since conservation measures affect downstream users, we need to be looking at water use efficiency from a basin-wide standpoint.
- We need to investigate how demand management can affect timing of flow rivers.
- Many representatives of agriculture do not view permanent land retirement as satisfying the solution principles. Land retirement should not be included as a measure for water use efficiency.

Temporary Land Fallowing/Permanent Land Retiring

- Costs and benefits need to be addressed. Permanent land retirement may have significant effects on the local economy compared to temporary land fallowing.
- The benefits to water quality must be considered in permanent land retiring.
- Impacts due to drought are addressed by temporary land fallowing.
- On an annual (first year) basis, the economic impacts due to land fallowing and land retirement are the same.
- We need to investigate innovative measures to reduce ET.
- Delta export water allocation for the fallowed or retired lands must stay within the control of the local irrigation district.

Water Recycling

- For MWD, salinity of the source water is an important issue that will dictate the cost of water recycling.
- We need to address how much reclaimed water can be generated and in what time frame.
- In looking at the water savings from conservation and reclamation, we need to be careful not to double count.
- In some cases there may be no market for reclaimed water (eg. Fresno). This can be a true constraint.

CALFED's approach for water use efficiency may move away from the prescriptive approach to a more flexible base conditions approach. Some of the concerns raised were:

- If flexible base conditions are used, then we may not get beyond the Core Actions. This may not achieve optimum water use efficiency goals.
- Uniform approach to water use efficiency is workable and agency buy-in can be achievable. Uniform outcome of water savings (range of values) may not be possible or desirable.

Other Issues:

- The possibility of capitalizing costs of water use efficiency should be examined, just as costs for construction of new water supply facilities are capitalized.

Next meeting is set for June 27, 1996 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.