

Information Item

**Letter from Tom Zuckerman
regarding the role of the Ecosystem Roundtable and
the CALFED response**

Thomas M. Zuckerman

February 23, 1999

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Gentlemen:

I was unable to attend the Roundtable meeting on Wednesday, February 3, because of a conflict with another regular board meeting. Subsequent to that meeting I inquired of Roundtable staff and found that the next meeting (March 16) is also scheduled on a day on which I have a previously scheduled series of board meetings. I would hope that my absence at two consecutive meetings would be excused in terms of the disqualification procedure about which we had some preliminary discussions some time ago. Parenthetically, I understand that Wendy is working up a schedule for future meetings which I would find very useful in terms of planning my own schedule.

I continue to be concerned about the Roundtable's role, and I believe my concerns are shared by others. Hence, I thought it best to reduce them to writing for distribution to the other Roundtable members, the CALFED staff and the BDAC co-chairs in order that some discussion of these points could commence without further delay. Because the CALFED process appears to be transitioning from planning to implementation, these concerns, if legitimate, need to be addressed now rather than later.

Some background information may be helpful. As the Roundtable struggled to develop its role in the early implementation process, we found ourselves shut out from project selection process by perceived legal constraints. My personal

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view was this was probably appropriate on practical grounds, rather than legal grounds, because of the need to have technical people reviewing the merits of project proposals. I was, and remain, concerned that the selection process be fair. The Roundtable proposed that a Roundtable representative be included in the Integration Panel deliberations to insure that some form of mutual backscratching wasn't going on between the Integration Panel members whose employers or allies were proposing projects for funding. This proposal was not implemented.

The latest maneuver to select several projects as "directed actions" and allocate a significant portion of the available funds for these actions raises suspicions and highlights the inherent conflict in having the recipients of the funds being involved in project selection.

Subsequently, the "Needs Subcommittee" had several meetings and concluded that the Roundtable's role should be in developing a "blue print" strategy for early implementation of the Ecosystem Restoration process. A rather detailed proposal was developed, but (as far as I can tell) was never implemented. The anticipated result of such a role by the Roundtable would have been rationalization of the earliest funded projects against an overall implementation strategy.

Because of some criticism of the first published version of the ERPP, a panel of scientists (the Core Team) was convened which generated a strategy document which, in my opinion, was excellent. More recently, that document has been redrafted by staff (Strategic Plan For Ecosystem Restoration, December 1998 Draft) with some significant variation from the Core Team effort. At about the same time the revised Phase II Report was published. Both of these documents address Stage I Ecosystem Restoration Projects. As far as I can tell from my review, neither version of the proposed Stage I action makes reference to or incorporates in any meaningful manner the projects whose funding has come through the Ecosystem Roundtable process previously. This leaves a very large open question as to whether the work previously authorized through the Roundtable/BDAC process is consistent with the ERPP as it now stands. This question needs to be answered forthwith: Has the

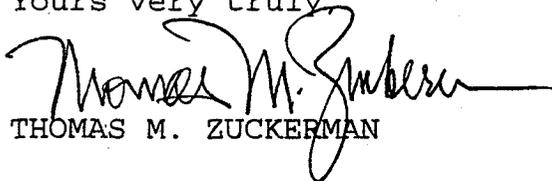
early implementation process been effective in accomplishing the ERPP strategy?

To the extent that the Roundtable has received information about the expenditure of funds for the early implementation projects, it appears that although a lot of money has been authorized for expenditure not much of it has actually been spent due to delays in getting authorized projects started. And yet there is an annual frenzy to get more funds authorized and more projects approved.

I am very uncomfortable with this state of Roundtable affairs. I continue to feel that the Roundtable is not playing a meaningful role in the process and make the following suggestions:

1. The Roundtable should be given a meaningful role in setting the strategy for Ecosystem Restoration and its implementation and in providing oversight for the implementation process.
2. The funding process should be slowed down until the strategy, implementation and oversight process catches up with previously authorized funding.
3. Alternatively, the Roundtable should be disbanded, and its supposed functions should be incorporated in some meaningful fashion in the governance of the CALFED process going forward.

Yours very truly


THOMAS M. ZUCKERMAN

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cc: Lester A. Snow
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Sunne McPeak



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April 6, 1999

Mr. Thomas M. Zuckerman
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Dear Mr. Zuckerman:

Thank you for your letter regarding the role of the Ecosystem Roundtable. I wanted to respond to several points in your letter. As the early implementation program evolves, so too does the role of the Ecosystem Roundtable. The Roundtable still must play a meaningful role in providing policy level input into the project selection process. The calendar I have developed is tailored to allowing the Roundtable to provide input at key points in the current proposal solicitation process. Additionally, as was done last year, the Roundtable will be involved in development of annual funding priorities.

As the process evolves, we are making every attempt to become more efficient in early implementation expenditures while describing how those projects meet the goals of the long-term Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP). This includes improved tracking of projects already funded and increased focus on ERP actions through the solicitation process and directed actions. Your suggestions on how to better describe our progress are welcome.

The Roundtable will continue to play an important role as the future governance of CALFED is determined. We hope you will continue your participation in the Roundtable. If you have any questions please contact me at (916) 653-5950.

Sincerely,

Wendy Halverson Martin
Restoration Coordinator

CALFED Agencies

California The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service