

CR8 Keep Bay Fresh Water Flows

This is in response to comments concerned with the San Francisco Bay. Many comments stated that CALFED should focus on promoting the health of the San Francisco Bay by restoring and maintaining its fresh water flows. Other comments stated the San Francisco Bay should be included in the Problem Area defined by CALFED.

This program encompasses the entire Bay Delta watershed, which includes not only the Bay-Delta, but also the tributaries to the Delta and the near-shore ocean. One of the goals of the program is to rehabilitate natural processes in the Bay-Delta system to support, with minimal ongoing human intervention, natural aquatic and associated terrestrial biotic communities, in ways that favor native members of those communities. The ERP will seek to restore the dynamic processes of flow, sediment transport, channel erosion and disposition, and ecological succession that create and maintain natural channel and bank conditions favorable to salmon and other species.

CALFED is also committed to achieving continuous improvement in the quality of waters of San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary with the goal of minimizing ecological, drinking water, and other water quality problems and to maintaining that quality once achieved. This objective extends to the watersheds of the estuary to the extent that water quality problems in these watersheds affect beneficial uses dependent on the estuary.

Some comments expressed concern that CALFED is not directly focusing on promoting the health of San Francisco Bay, particularly the Central and South Bay areas. It is true that the Program has not included San Francisco Bay as part of its defined *problem* area (which includes the legally defined Delta, Suisun Bay extending to Carquinez Strait, and Suisun Marsh). Nevertheless, because the Bay-Delta system is part of a larger water and biological resource system, solutions to address the problems in the system will include a broader geographic scope extending both upstream and downstream. This solution scope includes San Pablo Bay, San Francisco Bay, and portions of the Pacific Ocean out to the Farallon Islands. In particular, the Program will address interactions between the Delta and San Francisco Bay, such as flow or sediment, by examining the "inputs" and "outputs" from the defined problem area. In keeping with CALFED's solution principle that solutions should have no significant redirected impacts, consideration will be given to how program activities affect the San Francisco Bay region.

The Bay-Delta ecosystem is large, complex, diverse and variable. It contains California's two largest rivers, the Sacramento River (which drains an area of more than 25,000 square miles) and the San Joaquin River (draining more than 14,000 square miles). These two rivers converge in the Delta, which coupled with greater San Francisco Bay, form the largest estuary on the West Coast. Tributaries that drain the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Cascade Range, and the Coast Ranges provide freshwater flow to the Bay-Delta estuary, thus connecting the salty water of the Pacific Ocean with mountain forests and meadows into a vast ecosystem that encompasses most of the Central Valley.

California's semi-arid climate produces pronounced variations in both seasonal and inter-

annual precipitation. These variations in precipitation produce highly variable flows of freshwater through the Delta tributaries and the estuary. Historically, during wet years, much of the Central Valley would flood to form a large inland sea of shallow water habitat, and during prolonged droughts, Bay Delta tributaries were reduced to trickles confined within narrow low-flow channels.

The ERP will not seek to restore the ecosystem to its pristine, pre-disturbance condition discussed above or some structural and functional configuration defined by a particular historic baseline. Rather it will seek to re-establish a balance in ecosystem structure and function to meet the needs of plant, animal, and human communities while maintaining or stimulating the regions diverse and vibrant economy.

The geographical scope of the CALFED Program is presented in Chapter 1.3 of the PEIS/EIR. The Ecosystem Restoration Program is the program component that will have the most direct impact on the ecological health of the Bay -Delta. Information concerning Ecosystem Restoration Program plan elements can be in found in the appendices to the PEIS/EIR. Information concerning the environmental consequences of the Program Elements to the Bay Region is contained in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the PEIS/EIR.