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**GOVERNOR DAVIS, INTERIOR SECRETARY BABBITT
DISCUSS WATER ISSUES PROGRESS**

Governor Gray Davis and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt met today to update progress on two key elements of California's water future: the Colorado River Agreement and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

Colorado River Agreement

They renewed expressions of support for the Colorado River Agreement, urging negotiators for major southern California water districts to achieve a detailed accord facilitating transfers of conserved Colorado River water.

"This is a vital step toward enabling California to reduce its use of Colorado River water to the 4.4 million acre-feet annually which the Federal government has mandated," said Governor Davis.

"Negotiators must develop a working arrangement for water transfers to make the most efficient, versatile uses of Colorado River water," said Secretary Babbitt, whose Deputy Secretary, David Hayes, is assisting in the negotiations process. "In their ongoing discussions to develop detailed agreement language, they are building on a framework agreement reached earlier this month."

CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Governor Davis and Secretary Babbitt pledged to accelerate progress on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, challenging CALFED members (State and federal agencies) and stakeholders to achieve a series of milestones to assure completion of the CALFED Final Plan by next spring.

"CALFED offers the best hope in decades to resolve historic water resource conflicts," said Davis. "But success will require a new, unprecedented level of effort by participants and stakeholders. The legacy of a lasting water peace is worth the hard work and frustration involved."

"CALFED is critically important to the Clinton Administration and all Californians," said Babbitt. "I am committed to doing whatever it takes to meet

CALFED's schedule to develop long-term solutions to Delta water and ecosystem challenges."

The Governor and Secretary stressed the importance of CALFED developing innovative approaches to meet the challenges of restoring the health of the estuary while providing more reliable supplies of clean water for cities, farms, and fish. These include:

- An Environmental Water Account, which will provide more flexible water project operations to restore fisheries and meet competing demands for water from the Delta, and
- An Integrated Storage Investigation, which will evaluate the role of surface and groundwater storage in providing more reliable supplies.

They directed CALFED and agency staff to develop a framework for these approaches by the end of the year, and to continue developing comprehensive programs on ecosystem restoration, water use efficiency, water marketing and transfers, drinking water quality, watershed and floodplain management, and South Delta water management improvements as part of the final plan due next spring.

They also discussed the importance of a coordinated approach to managing flows for fisheries under the federal Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA). Interior will continue to consult with State agencies in crafting the final decision on implementing the CVPIA ("b2") provision calling for the dedication of 800,000 acre feet of water for fishery purposes. They agreed that regardless of the outcome of ongoing litigation and Interior's final decision, State and federal agencies must work through CALFED to consider Interior's decision in the development of the final CALFED Plan.

Finally, they agreed that a continued strong commitment to State and federal funding is vital to the success of the CALFED Program. They agreed that the Bay-Delta Environmental Enhancement and Water Security Act of 1996 should be reauthorized to provide the federal share for CALFED's ecosystem restoration program, and that sufficient federal and State funds also must be made available for all CALFED Program elements to assure balanced implementation. The Governor added that he will urge the State legislature to enact a State water bond to provide the State's share of funding for the first stage of the Program.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a cooperative effort among State and federal agencies, stakeholders, and the public. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program's mission is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management in the Bay-Delta system. The Program issued a draft plan in June, and public hearings on the plan are being held throughout the State in August and September.