

Memorandum

Date: July 12, 2000

To: CALFED Management Group

From: Steve Ritchie
Acting Executive Director

Subject: Request for Levee Restoration Funding for Van Sickle Island in the Suisun Marsh

Summary

CALFED has added the Suisun Marsh to its Levee Program to achieve its primary objectives in Ecosystem Restoration and Water Quality.

Ensuring the integrity of the exterior levees in the Suisun Marsh is critical to sustaining seasonal wetland values provided by the Marsh's managed wetlands. Improved levees would ensure that conversion to tidal wetlands will not be due to levee failure, but instead, will be planned with consideration of landowner support, ERP targets, regional wetland goals, and endangered species recovery plans.

CALFED's modeling research clearly indicates there is significant risk of water quality impacts in the Delta if Suisun Marsh levees are not maintained.

CALFED's Implementation Framework includes \$180 Million for extensive Ecosystem Restoration, in-Delta Drinking Water Quality improvements, and restoration of the Suisun Marsh Levee System. CALFED is preparing a draft report outlining the costs and benefits of these proposed actions. Stakeholder outreach efforts have been very successful.

However, as this planning effort continues, the existing levee system is deteriorating. In particular, various reaches of levees on Van Sickle Island are in very bad condition due to subsidence. While not an immediate emergency, these reaches of levee will be in jeopardy next winter. Reclamation District 1607 is maintaining the levees to the best of their ability. However, they are requesting financial assistance from CALFED to complete this work this construction season.

Reclamation District 1607 has prepared a cost estimate (see letter to CALFED). They are proposing a 90% - 10% cost sharing of \$100,000. CALFED's share would be \$90,000. These funds are available from CALFED's Suisun Marsh planning budget (from the 99-00 federal appropriation).

Action

The Management Group is being requested to provide up to \$90,000 to fund levee restoration on Van Sickle Island in the Suisun Marsh as a necessary preventative action while CALFED's planning efforts conclude.

Recommendation

CALFED staff recommends that CALFED Management Group approve this request as a necessary step in preserving a critical Suisun Marsh island during CALFED's Suisun Marsh planning effort. The work being requested is the type of work that CALFED's Suisun Marsh Levee Program would fund when CALFED implementation begins. This is viewed as a very high leverage activity to preserve this island during planning. It will be very expensive to reclaim this island to reverse the in-Delta water quality degradation caused by levee failure. DWR has agreed to provide the staff to coordinate this effort.