

Editorials

Roadblock for CalFed

FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS federal and state water officials have been working together to develop a long-range, comprehensive plan to more efficiently distribute water and restore the critically important Delta estuary. With so many competing interests, including industrial, residential, agricultural and recreational water users, as well as environmentalists, the process has not been easy.

However, substantial progress has been made by the group, known as CalFed, toward a plan that is designed to increase water supplies through greater storage capacity, possibly a Delta bypass aqueduct and conservation. CalFed also seeks to salvage a deteriorating Delta environment with increased fresh-water flows into the system during the dry season.

The unprecedented cooperation among varied water interests is itself a major accomplishment.

For decades farmers, urban water users and environmentalists have been fighting over how to best use the state's valuable but limited water supplies.

With the formation of CalFed, narrow, parochial thinking has given way to an understanding that the state's water needs can met only if there is cooperation among all interested parties on a regional basis.

Unfortunately, not everyone is cooperating. The Regional Council of Rural Counties, a coalition of 28 counties with watersheds that supply 80 percent of the state's developed water, is standing in the way of CalFed progress.

These counties, which make up much of the central portion of California from the Oregon border into the southern part of the state, have put selfish local interests in the way of CalFed. These counties are quickly drawing up ordinances to block or limit the transfer of ground water beyond county boundaries.

If these ordinances are allowed to stand, the landmark CalFed agreement is likely to fail. The rural counties would hardly be disappointed. They fear the CalFed plan will take water from the north into the central and southern parts of the state, forcing some counties to tap into their ground-water supplies. That is possible, even though CalFed hopes to meet most of the state's water demands with increased storage capacity in current and new reservoirs.

Rep. Wally Herger, R-Chico, a supporter of the rural counties' fears, said CalFed would "mean the end of local control over ground-water resources in California." He's right about loss of local control, but wrong in believing it would be a bad idea.

It is long past time for Californians to regard water as a statewide or at least a regional resource. When California was largely a rural, agricultural state with a small population, local water control may have made sense, or at least was not harmful to the state as a whole.

But without regional control and cooperation regarding water supplies, the state will suffer economically and environmentally. The CalFed coalition understands this reality. It is too bad there are still so many local officials who do not.

Smoking out local crime



BEATIE H-TOMER, C.
Copley Award '92
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Sowell is sounding desparate

Thomas Sowell's rec against Bill Clinton were though not because the ticularly good argumen writings rarely rise above moric and mean-spirite

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The legacy themes : taking shape in the p press.

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