



# CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

# Program Overview

fall 1997

## What Is CALFED?

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program was initiated in 1995 by Governor Pete Wilson and the Clinton Administration to address environmental and water management problems associated with the Bay-Delta system, an intricate web of waterways created at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and the watershed that feeds them. Today the Bay-Delta system is in serious trouble. Habitats are declining, and some native species are listed as endangered. The system has suffered from impaired water quality. Water supply reliability has declined significantly. Many levees are structurally weak and present a high risk of failure. The Bay-Delta system is a critically important part of California's natural environment and economy. It supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians and irrigation water for more than four million acres of the world's most productive farmland, which, for example, produce 45 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables. It supports 120 fish and wildlife species; some found nowhere else on the planet. Ultimately, California's trillion-dollar economy, the seventh largest in the world, is at risk if Bay-Delta system environmental and water management problems are not resolved.

## 3 Program Phases

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is carrying out a three phase process to achieve broad agreement on comprehensive solutions for the Bay-Delta system. The three phases are:

*Phase I -- Develop Alternatives:* During Phase I (June 1995 to August 1996) the Program worked to clearly define the fundamental problems in the Bay-Delta system, ecosystem quality, water quality, water supply and levee system vulnerability. This resulted in the development of a mission statement and general goals for the Program. It also resulted in an initial set of alternatives, or sets of actions, to be considered in Phase II.

*Phase II -- Further Analysis and Environmental Review:* To comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, the Program is preparing a program-level, or first tier, Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement to identify impacts associated with the various alternatives. (Program-level reports evaluate the broad array of potential impacts associated with a project, rather than site-specific, detailed impact analysis.) Upon selection of a preferred alternative, the third Phase of the process begins, site-specific environmental review.

*Phase III --Implementation:* During Phase III, which will begin in early 1999 and continue perhaps for 20 to 30 years, the preferred alternative will be implemented. This phase includes preparation of specific, or second-tier, environmental documents for all specific actions in the selected alternative. This may entail the development of multiple environmental documents necessary to implement the many actions designed to achieve a multi-objective strategy.

*The mission of the  
CALFED Bay-Delta  
Program is to develop a  
long-term comprehensive  
plan that will restore  
ecological health and  
improve water  
management for  
beneficial uses of  
the Bay-Delta system.*

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## The Common Programs

During Phase I it was determined that all alternatives to solve Bay-Delta system problems needed to include four "common programs" to address fundamental issues. These common programs are:

- **Ecosystem Quality** -- restore the ecosystem to levels needed to support Bay-Delta system species at naturally sustainable levels, including the habitats necessary for survival of species that use the ecosystem.
- **Levee System Integrity** -- reduce the risk of levee failure due to floods, earthquakes and general deterioration by developing a long-term maintenance plan and an emergency levee management plan.
- **Water Quality** -- focus on controlling pollution at its source. Reducing the amount of pollutants entering the Delta benefits all water users by reducing salts for agricultural diversions, improving drinking water quality, and increasing water quality for the ecosystem.
- **Water Use Efficiency** -- programs that increase the efficiency with which water is used and increase water reuse, including conservation, recycling and reclamation. Water use efficiency can also be viewed as reaping the greatest benefit from each unit of water.

## Developing a Solution

Finding a solution to the problems facing California's Bay-Delta system, at the heart of California's water management system, is no small task. For the past two decades, competing demands on the Bay-Delta system from the environment, agriculture and growing urban areas have led to concerns about water quality, unreliable water supplies, damage to the ecosystem and weak levees. These problems threaten this tremendous ecological and economic resource.

Phase I of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program resulted in three conceptual alternative solutions to undergo assessment in Phase II of the Program (see insert). These alternatives were developed with input from CALFED agencies, the federally chartered Bay-Delta Advisory Council and interested members of the public.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program also worked with stakeholders to create a narrowing process to identify a preferred alternative for addressing problems facing the Bay-Delta system. Seventeen configurations of the three conceptual alternatives were first evaluated to identify those that best satisfy the Program's solution principles. The solution principles call for a plan that will reduce conflicts in the system, be equitable, affordable, durable, implementable, and have no significant redirected impacts.

Alternative variations are now being ranked according to their ability to meet the Program's objectives. To determine this information, CALFED staff is conducting modeling studies, prefeasibility studies and impact analyses. In September 1997, five configurations were eliminated from further consideration, leaving 12 to undergo further consideration.

## Reaching Consensus

The final step in the narrowing process is to choose a draft preferred alternative. This choice will be based on technical analysis and public input regarding necessary trade-offs. This solution -- or preferred alternative -- will represent the best overall balance in achieving Program objectives and consistency with the solution principles.