



A Watershed Runs Through It

When some people think of the Bay-Delta system, they see the intricate web of sloughs and channels, levees, farms and historic towns in the Delta itself. Others picture the vast San Francisco Bay, where habitat and wildlife is largely dependent on Bay-Delta system flows. But there's another key component of the Bay-Delta system that is equally as critical—the watersheds that feed the system. A watershed is defined as an area that drains ultimately to a particular river or stream, usually bounded by a natural divide such as a hill, ridge or mountain. The American River Basin is one example of a watershed. The watersheds included in the CALFED Bay-Delta Program extend from the crest of the Sierra Nevadas in the north to portions of the Tulare Basin in the south and to the east and west sides of the Central Valley.

Unlike previous attempts to resolve the water management and environmental problems associated with the Bay-Delta system, the comprehensive plan being developed by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is based on an integrated approach. An integrated approach ensures that proposed actions are evaluated based on potential benefits and impacts throughout the entire CALFED solution area, which covers most of California and its near-shore ocean and all Bay-Delta system watersheds. An improved healthy watershed can result in an increase in the amount of usable water that flows into the Bay-Delta system and improved water quality. Both of these results benefit the environment and water users alike. "You cannot have a Bay-Delta solution without addressing the health of the watershed," said Lester Snow, CALFED executive director. "Our goal right now is to identify all the current watershed management efforts, most of which are being led by local entities,

Upper and Lower Watershed Areas
Addressed by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Watershed Management Policy



and see how we can support those efforts and ultimately integrate them into our overall approach." Some actions CALFED proposes to address watershed management include:

- Helping coordinate government programs with local and regional projects and land owners
- Fostering local watershed projects
- Providing a process through which partnerships with agencies and local entities may be formed
- Identifying watershed projects which address critical problems of the Bay-Delta estuary
- Providing technical and financial information to assist local watershed groups conducting projects that have a benefit to the Bay-Delta estuary
- Helping set standardized methods for monitoring, data collection and reporting
- Fostering the exchange of information across watershed boundaries

CALFED Program Update

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program will identify a preferred alternative for a Bay-Delta solution after it receives more feedback. "We need additional public input on the issues we're grappling with to make a definitive decision," said Lester Snow, CALFED executive director. "There are trade-offs associated with each of the options on the table, and we must inform the public about those trade-offs so they can tell us what is most important to them." The PEIS/EIR is planned for release this March, and will highlight the alternative with technical resource management advantages, as well as contain information on the various alternatives developed. One issue that looms large is that of assurances, or, how well can the solution guarantee that it will be implemented as it is intended. Assurances being considered include changes to legislation, the size or capacity of proposed facilities and written agreements among competing interests. CALFED will soon announce dates and locations for a series of public meetings this spring to gain additional input.

More Funding for Local Projects

Fresh on the heels of the announcement of \$100 million for ecosystem restoration projects, CALFED is preparing for a new round of evaluation and funding, with \$88.5 million available in 1998. This ecosystem restoration funding is known as Category III because of a section in the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord that calls for early implementation of certain ecosystem restoration projects -- before the comprehensive solution is finalized. Funding for Category III has come from Proposition 204, passed by California voters in 1996; from the California Bay Delta Environmental Enhancement Act, passed by Congress in 1996; and from voluntary contributions from urban water agencies over the last three years. In 1998, CALFED will revisit high priority proposals from 1997 that didn't get funded, solicit new proposals and, in several cases, fund designated actions (high priority actions where only one entity is suitable for implementing). An independent panel of scientific experts assists CALFED in evaluating proposed projects. CALFED is expected to announce in March criteria for the new grant process.



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