

CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM

Eco-Update

News About the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program

September 1998, Issue 4

\$25 Million in Local Projects to be Funded

CALFED is selecting more than \$25 million in ecosystem restoration projects as part of its commitment to implement certain restoration projects prior to the completion of a comprehensive Bay-Delta solution. This spring, proposals were solicited to address nine specific topics targeted by CALFED, including floodplain management and habitat restoration, sediment management, species life history studies, local watershed stewardship and environmental education. CALFED received 180 proposals requesting more than \$160 million. Last year, CALFED funded 71 projects totaling more than \$85 million.

"These ecosystem restoration projects are tangible evidence of a lasting Bay-Delta solution," said Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "Our process allows local and regional entities to implement priority projects and programs that will ultimately benefit California as a whole."

The 1998 funding comes from state Proposition 204, the federal Bay-Delta Act and federal watershed funding.

In addition to ecosystem restoration, as part of its long-term solution, CALFED is developing comprehensive, inter-linked programs to address water quality, water use efficiency, levee system integrity, watershed management and water transfers.

Proposals were evaluated by a number of technical and stakeholder panels. These evaluations were

presented to CALFED's public advisory group, the Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC), September 10 and 11. In mid-September, CALFED policy-makers considered comments from BDAC, as well as the results of the technical evaluations. A recommendation will be made to the California Secretary for Resources and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, who will announce the selected projects this fall. The next solicitation for local ecosystem restoration projects will be announced in 1999.

Scientists, Delta Residents Help Shape Plan

A group of independent scientists and Delta area residents are working



with CALFED to shape its Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP), a critical component to the long-term Bay-Delta solution.

Last October, CALFED convened an independent Scientific Review Panel to evaluate a draft ERPP. Using this report, CALFED developed a strategic plan emphasizing how proposed actions to restore the environment can be measured and prioritized, based on sound scientific data.

Prominent scientific experts from UC Berkeley, UC Davis, San Francisco State University and the

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University of British Columbia were retained by CALFED to help develop this strategic plan, which will be included in the revised draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR).

Also helping to shape CALFED's ERPP are Delta area interests, who presented a plan to CALFED in September. The ad hoc group outlined an approach for ecosystem restoration that relies on publicly held lands first, followed by acquisition and enhancement of currently flooded lands to create or enhance emergent habitat. About 27,000 acres of public or soon-to-be public lands have been identified for Stage 1 implementation of a Bay-Delta solution.

"When the ERPP was first released for public review, some people expressed concern that their land would be taken from them and used for environmental restoration purposes," says Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "The community has helped us develop a plan that can meet CALFED goals and respects local interests in the process."

A proposed implementation plan containing specific information on all aspects of the Bay-Delta solution, will be released for public review along with the revised draft programmatic EIS/EIR in December.

Dam Serves Its Purpose, Is Demolished

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt took a sledgehammer to McPherrin Dam recently to signal the coming demolition of the decades-old structure that today sits atop one of the few remaining Sacramento River tributaries with spring-run Chinook salmon.

"There are more than 75,000 dams in the nation, most built long ago, many in the 19th century," Babbitt said. "Of course, many dams are still useful, but others are clearly obsolete. The role of many of these structures needs to be reassessed.

The people along Butte Creek have found better alternatives."

The event showcased the cooperative efforts of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Western Canal Water District, CALFED and other partners in improving the Bay-Delta system's environment through a consensus-based process. Among those in attendance to watch the first blows to McPherrin Dam were local ranchers, irrigators and urban water managers.

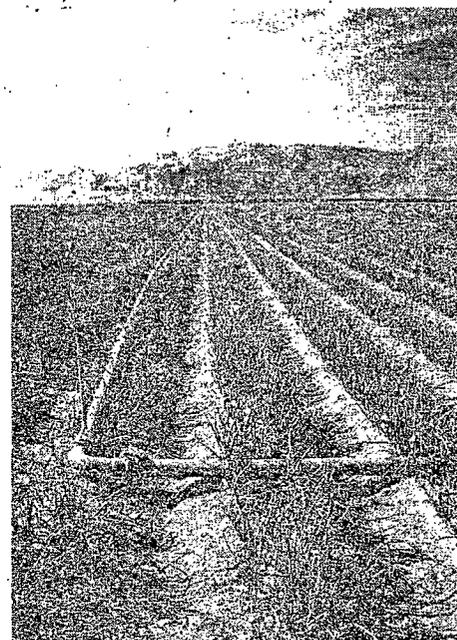
"Let us remember that dams are not, in the end, monuments to mankind," said Babbitt. "They are simply instruments that serve the needs of the people who build them. Those needs change, often quite rapidly, over the course of a generation."

Groups Explore Alternatives to Pesticide Use

Earlier this year, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) was awarded \$472,000 by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to implement programs to reduce the use of pesticides in the Sacramento and San Joaquin river watersheds. Chemicals used in almond and walnut farming

have been traced to contamination of the Bay-Delta, and studies show agricultural pesticides are often present in the San Joaquin River and streams at levels that could harm fish and other

organisms. To help improve water quality in the Bay-Delta, CAFF, a statewide non-profit organization that promotes sustainable agriculture on family-scale farms in rural communities, applied for and received funds



through the CALFED program to implement a program called BIOS. "Biologically Integrated Orchard Systems" provides information to farmers interested in reducing or eliminating pesticide use. The programs include hands-on assistance in alternative production practices for almond and walnut growers, and farm demonstration and field days in agricultural communities. Farmers working with BIOS have learned to use tools such as planting cover crops, providing habitat for beneficial insects and other wildlife, and monitoring levels of both pest and beneficial insects.

The Lighthouse Farm Network is another program developed by CAFF, which provides a forum for farmers to share their experiences as they reduce or eliminate the use of toxic chemicals. To date, BIOS and the Lighthouse Farm Network have operated as demonstration and technique development programs. With funding from CALFED, the programs will begin facilitating widespread conversion to biological farming strategies. Reduction or elimination of the targeted chemicals will result in enhanced habitat for a large variety of aquatic species and an improved physical environment for people because of the broader diversity of species and the elimination of chemicals from surface and groundwater.

New Demonstration Project

A CALFED grant will fund the design and permitting of a demonstration project to examine methods for restoring and managing in-channel Delta islands. In-channel islands provide habitat for many special status species.



They also provide recreational, aesthetic and levee protection benefits.

Concerns about the overuse of riprap, a rocky material that does not allow vegetation growth for fish and wildlife habitat, motivated a group of state and federal government officials, local landowners, environmentalists, boaters, farmers and others to explore alternatives.

Four islands will be examined in the project; three are located near Webb Tract in Contra Costa County, and one in San Joaquin County. The islands provide a wide range of habitat and engineering field conditions. At each site, primary stressors, such as dredging activities, invasive aquatic plants, disturbances caused by boating and loss of shallow water habitat will be identified and individual designs to address them developed.

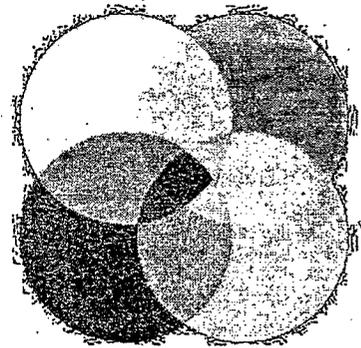
Once implemented, government agencies, landowners and others can use the results of these demonstration projects in carrying out the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan.

"Ecosystem" Projects Help Meet Multiple Program Objectives

While CALFED has focused its early efforts on ecosystem restoration, many of these projects are also solving problems in other areas.

CALFED has identified four main problems facing the Bay-Delta system:

ecosystem quality, levee system reliability, water quality and water supply reliability.



- The Cache Slough Habitat Enhancement project builds habitat for the endangered Delta smelt on a half-mile section of old levee and stops the levee from washing away.

- The Integrated Pest Management Program educates people on safe pesticide use to keep chemicals out of Suisun Bay, improving water quality for users and for the environment.
- The San Joaquin River Real-Time Water Quality Management Program helps upstream farmers control run-off from their fields so the San Joaquin River is safe for fish and downstream farmers can use it to irrigate their fields.
- The McCormick Saeltzer Dam Project fixes an old dam so salmon can move upstream easily and farmers can still get the water they need.

Comments On Line

The CALFED draft EIS/EIR and all the written comments received during the public review period are available at the CALFED website: <http://calfed.ca.gov>

Schedule Update

The next milestone in the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is the release of the Phase II Report identifying a preferred alternative and revised draft Programmatic EIS/EIR for public review and comment. This is expected at the end of the year.



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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.

