**CALFED NEWS, JANUARY 1999**

**Editorial: Water: Back to the Table**
Los Angeles Times - Monday, January 4, 1999

For four years, state and federal agencies, urban water officials, agricultural leaders and environmentalists have struggled to settle some of the most complex and vexing water issues ever to face California. Working under the title Cal-Fed, they had hoped to announce agreement recently on the first stage of a proposed 30-year, $8-billion program. The goal is to restore the environment of the polluted Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and assure a stable, high-quality water supply for two-thirds of all Californians, including those in coastal Southern California.

A formal agreement would have been a major achievement, but water disputes are not settled easily: Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and outgoing Gov. Pete Wilson were able to proclaim progress but not a deal. The hitch came in the conclusion of the Cal-Fed interim report, which says construction of an undetermined number of off-stream reservoirs may be needed to meet California's future water needs--a provision adamantly opposed by environmental organizations.

But this setback should not overshadow the significant progress Cal-Fed has made. The 157-page document contains some creative new programs to restore the environment and improve the quality of water exports from the delta to the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California. The plan would also enhance flood control and improve the riverine habitat throughout the 61,000-square-mile Sacramento-San Joaquin watershed, running from Kern County north to the Oregon border. The plan includes a water marketing program, stretching water supplies through conservation and reclamation, and greater use of ground-water basins for storage in wet years for use in times of drought.

Perhaps most important to the environmental community, the plan will attempt to avoid building a concrete channel around the delta. A decision on the Peripheral Canal will be put off at least seven years. Babbitt stressed that no conclusions have been reached about the need for new reservoirs although farming, labor and development interests indicated they could not support Cal-Fed without them.

The future health of California's economy depends on an adequate supply of high-quality water and a healthy environment. And the future of California's water supply depends on the success of the Cal-Fed process. It cannot be allowed to fail. ##

**Excerpts from Gov. Davis' state of the state address**
Associated Press - Filed: January 6, 1999

... I will keep the CalFed effort moving forward to address our critical water needs in a balanced and responsible way. I will ensure that all the parties have a stake in the process and I will require compromise by them all. No one will get everything they want but no one will come away empty handed. . . ##

**Editorial: CALFED best hope for ending struggle**
San Joaquin Record - January 6, 1999

"Like a bridge over troubled water.

"I will lay me down."

When Paul Simon wrote those lyrics in 1969, he was thinking of the emotional commitment that comes from a romantic, or marital, relationship. Simon also could have been addressing the troubled status of California's never-ending struggle for water. In the midst of that struggle, CALFED, a polyglot of 14 state and federal agencies, is slowly attempting to build a bridge.

And we've got to present a unified San Joaquin County voice to help build that bridge. There have been renewed efforts locally to create consensus, attempting to build on obvious areas of agreement: more water is needed, and elimination of the overdraft must be a priority.

In 1994, after decades of wrangling and a tsunami of evidence, the only thing clear to the state's competing water interests was the need for and inevitability of sharing a dwindling and diminished supply.

Enter CALFED as the last, best hope for compromise and an ambitious goal: a permanent solution, a master plan for the San Francisco Bay/San Joaquin Delta region.

The CALFED blueprint was supposed to address many of the longstanding issues that have divided Californians:

* Pumping -- or conveyance -- from the water-rich north to the thirsty south.

* Water storage -- where? above or below ground; how? how much?

* Preservation and restoration measures addressing everything from Delta levees to habitat and species.

* Conservation both by urban users and agricultural interests.

The best the CALFED folks could come up with was a draft proposal heavy on ecological concerns. For county residents, the plan has more positives than negatives -- but still holds out the possibility of a Delta bypass.

Where's the silver lining?

While the CALFED process may be moving slower than lazy Delta carp, it is moving. And it is still together. The environmentalists are still talking to the farmers, Metropolitan Water District officials and recreational users remain at the table, government officials at all levels continue to be committed.

Next up on CALFED's ever-expanding calendar is a series of post-draft plan meetings up and down the state. One of five public workshops is planned for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20, at Hutchins Street Square in Lodi. CALFED deserves an A grade for paddling along -- even if it is upstream -- with openness and determination to see the process through.

In its public information about the meeting, the state/ federal coalition puts an appropriately serious spin on its efforts: "The Bay/Delta is critically important to California's natural environment and economy. It supplies drinking water for two thirds of all Californians (more than 20 million people) and irrigation water for more than 7 million acres of the world's most-productive farmland. It supports 750 plant and animal species. California's trillion-dollar economy, the seventh largest in the world, is dependent on a healthy Bay/Delta system."

The question of how remains.

Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez, senior Democrat on the House Resources Committee and longtime Delta watcher, early last month offered a plan that he called as simple as ABC:

(A.) Assumptions and accountability: Review water demands before leaping ahead on expensive new storage and transfer facilities; perhaps we need an independent watchdog group to evaluate the efficiency of water use before committing tax dollars to planning new projects.

(B.) Balance: Strike the middle ground between big water users -- Southern California homeowners and Central Valley farmers -- and those who support waste water reduction through recycling and state-of-the-art efficiency. If CALFED doesn't require the efficient use of existing supplies, why build new facilities.

(C.) Checkbook: Taxpayers need to know upfront what it's going to cost to fix the state's water system. The CALFED draft plan indicated a substantial part of the multibillion-dollar funding could be borne by taxpayers through legislative appropriations and bond measures.

Miller points out that "the key ... to date has been keeping all the parties at the negotiating table, and that challenge will likely intensify."

No one in California can afford to ignore this process. CALFED is the state's best hope and should be commended for holding together.

When Paul Simon wrote his folk song, the Peripheral Canal was still very much alive. Water talks at the time broke down over the contentious issue. The residents of San Joaquin County can ill-afford for the canal to be under consideration again. The best way to prevent that -- and to protect our own interests -- is for local parties to finally realize the time is now to speak with one voice, or be left with only a trickle of influence. It's also time for all those involved to "lay me down," seek
compromise, give some, make sacrifices, see another's point of view and craft a policy taking the county and all of California into the new millennium. ##

**Calfed official says dam will stay; Thursday meeting to clarify issue**
Marysville Appeal-Democrat - January 12, by Harold Kruger, staff writer

Calfed is considering options other than tearing down Englebright Reservoir or making it a "dry" dam to improve fish habitat in the upper reaches of the Yuba River, a Calfed facilitator said Monday.

Kevin Wolf, who will preside Thursday during the second public meeting about Englebright, said resolutions and letters that oppose razing Englebright "have had a significant effect."

Levee District 1 directors sent a letter Monday to Calfed, saying that removing Englebright "would seriously compromise the integrity of the levees on both sides of the Feather River at and below its confluence with the Yuba River."

It also would "set a dangerous precedent and make it that much more difficult to erect additional flood control or water storage dams in the Yuba-Feather rivers watershed," the letter said.

Calfed Assistant Director Dick Daniel is expected to attend the Thursday night session in Penn Valley to answer questions from the public about the Calfed process.

"Dick is going to clarify that the Calfed would not consider removing the dam or making it a flood-control dam or causing significant alteration to the reservoir or dam," Wolf said.

"I know that they will confirm that they will proceed with feasibility studies for the potential for restoring habitat upstream of the dam without affecting the dam."

Last year, Calfed, a consortium of state and federal agencies, released a study that suggested razing the dam should be studied as one way to allow endangered fish to reach habitat upstream of Englebright.

Other options included making Englebright a "dry" dam by cutting a hole in it or building a tunnel around it. That would allow water to flow through or around the dam, except during times of high flow, when water would back up and fill the dam.

Another option was a fish ladder.

Now, according to Wolf, Calfed officials are looking at the possibility of rewatering two streams that would allow the fish to swim upstream above the dam. Some old flumes or flume routes also might be employed.

"In today's world of Calfed, all over the state, government is buying water to rewater streams," Wolf said.



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He said the Yuba County Water Agency might be a supplier.

"If the Yuba County Water Agency, for example, if it used its water to rewater the streams and then sold that water downstream as it did during the dry years, it could make significant financial benefits," Wolf said.

Wolf said one drawback to the plan is the possibility that there is a waterfall beneath Englebright that might make it difficult for the fish to make it upstream. He said the waterfall issue requires more study.

Thursday's session is the second of four planned meetings about Englebright.

"It's going to be an opportunity to understand the process and then to tell us what they think should be involved in any studies," Wolf said.

"I don't know what's going to happen if it's made very clear that Calfed will not be pursuing removal of the dam or changing of it. Will that change what people think should be the focus of the initial set of studies? We're going to let people beef and tell us what they think. They don't get that opportunity very often, and they're stirred up. I hope that doesn't consume the night."

Wolf said that "people are passionate about places, especially beautiful places. They're passionate about nature. Englebright's a beautiful place that really lets many people get into the heart of our river canyon. The richness of the river canyon unites everyone on both sides." ##

**Drive to Demolish Big Dam Unleashes Flood of Anger**
**Residents, visitors assail plan to get rid of Englebright Lake to save dwindling fish supply.**
Los Angeles Times - January 12, by Eric Bailey, staff writer

SMARTVILLE, Calif.--Dave Munro is loath to lose his lake. But it could happen. After a few years of haggling and a flotilla of studies, water authorities just might pull the plug on Englebright
Lake, drain it like a bathtub.

That prospect has Munro, marina owner at the foothills reservoir 50 miles northeast of Sacramento, understandably aghast. If the waters departed, Munro's livelihood would be sunk, along with his tidy harbor hosting 300 houseboats and three generations of hospitality. Try to dynamite Englebright Dam, Munro promises only half in jest, and he'll chain all 6 feet, 6 inches of himself to it.

But water officials have compelling reasons--among them the needs of a thirsty state--to look hard at Englebright and its 260-foot-tall dam.

For half a century, the arching concrete structure, a sort of half-pint Hoover Dam, has blocked migration of both steelhead trout and salmon up the Yuba River to the cold Sierra streams and pools where they spawn.

As a result, the fish are faltering. Their decline, water authorities fear, could crimp the ability to tap Northern California tributaries in future drought years for water pumped to the Central Valley and Southern California.

Experts say that the best way to boost the fish populations is to get them back into stretches of Central Valley streams blocked by dams like Englebright.

The hubbub comes amid a growing nationwide debate over dams.
>From the rivers of Maine to Malibu Creek, dams are under increasing scrutiny because of the barrier they pose for everything from fish to the flow of sand out onto beaches. The top targets across the country are what some dub "deadbeat dams," structures so archaic they have arguably outlived their intended purpose or begun to decay.

"We don't advocate removal of every dam, not even most dams," said Margaret Bowman of American Rivers, a national conservation organization. "The real numbers are in small dams that don't serve a useful purpose any longer. Many are abandoned. And most block fish."

Indeed, nearly all the dams downed so far have been relative pipsqueaks. Small dams have been removed in Vermont, Wisconsin and North Carolina. Out west, three tiny dams were toppled last year on Butte Creek in Northern California to aid salmon and steelhead.

Bigger dams like Englebright also are being eyed. While a pair on the salmon-depleted Elwha River in Washington State appear destined to fall, a pitched battle continues over four dams blocking the migration route of fish up the Columbia and Snake rivers. Environmentalists also vow to tackle upward of 500 hydroelectric dams nationwide coming up for license renewals in the next dozen years, including 50 in California.

Reversal of Dam Building

Such moves are a stark reversal from America's past. Since the days of the Revolution, we have been a dam-building people, erecting 75,000 nationwide. California has more than 1,200 dams taller than 25 feet.

"There's just an inexplicable attachment to dams on the part of Westerners," said Marc Reisner, author of "Cadillac Desert," which detailed the West's water wars. "They're our churches. In an arid landscape, the idea of a dam alters the nature of the universe out here. And the nature of the universe out here is pretty hostile."

As such, the task of downing a dam--politely referred to as "decommissioning" in bureaucratic circles--can seem as impossible as a free climb up the 754-foot face of Oroville Dam, the nation's tallest.

Look no further than the fight over Englebright.

The lake's boosters have bared knuckles, determined to dynamite any effort even to study the prospects of decommissioning the dam.

"We've become the poster-boy issue for some of the environmental folks who want to take down a big dam," said Munro, the bearded and bearish owner of Skippers Cove Marina. "They've taken down small ones, but they'd like a big one. I just think they've chosen the wrong one."

Englebright Dam was built in 1941 for one purpose: To catch silt that was cascading down the Yuba watershed after several decades of hydraulic mining in the waning days of the Gold Rush. Englebright has served that function quite well, with about 100 feet of sediment pooled at the dam's base.

Meanwhile, it has become home port for an armada of watercraft dotting the 11-mile-long lake. Two power plants generate enough electricity for 60,000 homes. Englebright also helps catch water cascading out of Bullards Bar Reservoir, particularly when its huge upstream hydropower dam jacks up releases to produce more electricity in peak summer months.

And by sending a consistent flow of water downstream even in dry months, Englebright Dam has helped make the lower Yuba among the better fisheries in the state.

But the dam also is a roadblock to fish migrating upstream, where the Yuba breaks into three forks and countless smaller tributaries. While some fish have adapted, two endangered varieties--the spring run Chinook salmon and steelhead trout--need access to the cold pools of the upper river to effectively spawn.

Agencies that send water south fear being forced to reduce pumping during weeks that the juvenile salmon or steelhead are heading out to sea, lest the fish be sucked up and killed. To keep water flowing, authorities want to take steps to improve odds of survival as the fish journey past the pumps.

A collection of 15 state and federal agencies, dubbed the CalFed Bay-Delta Program, has been working since 1995 to restore upward of 600 miles of salmon and steelhead habitat. Water from that region flows into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, where it is pumped to other parts of the state.

CalFed first targeted Englebright a year ago and is now preparing for an environmental study on how best to return fish to the upper reaches of the river.

Among the options are trapping and trucking fish around the dam. Authorities also are looking at using adjacent streams to let fish circumvent the dam and lake. Other possibilities include lowering the height of the dam and building a fish ladder or punching a hole in its base to create a "dry dam," which would let the river run unimpeded except in rainy months.

The last, and most drastic, is eliminating the dam completely.

Authorities would love to avoid such a step, but admit that it is on the table. "Anything we can do that most closely replicates the pre-dam natural process is desirable," said Dick Daniel, CalFed's assistant director for ecosystem restoration.

All the ideas have potential pitfalls. Trapping has been used to skirt dams on the Pacific Northwest's Columbia River, but with only limited success. Circumventing the lake could prove physically impossible or too costly. Environmentalists say fish ladders historically don't work well.

And taking down the dam or punching a hole in it might be too pricey. The Yuba County Water Agency, which opposes removing the dam, puts the cost at more than $450 million, most of it to compensate for the loss of hydroelectric power and recreational use.

Marina's Visitors

Munro says the lake draws up to 250,000 visitors a year, the bulk of them boaters who crowd the launch ramps or steer two-story houseboats onto the dappled waters.

"I raised both my boys here," said Don Whipple, who visits his houseboat on the lake at least 45 weekends a year. "They're grown and come up here now with their kids. I can't imagine not having this."

Larry Lyons, a maintenance worker at the lake, has built his two-story houseboat from the water up, replete with knotty pine paneling and other cozy touches. "It would be physically impossible to move this boat, just like most all the others," he said. "I'd have to take a chain saw and cut the top half off and throw it away."

Above the lake, the couple dozen homeowners who command soaring views of the water and steep, oak-studded canyon sides are no less anxious. If the dam goes, they say, their lake view would be replaced by a mudhole.

Environmentalists are like "this grizzly bear who has a hold of something and won't let loose of it," said Tom Borden, a homeowner above the lake since 1991. "I'm genuinely scared now that it's gotten this far."

Downstream residents are worried too. In Marysville and Yuba City, which straddle the confluence of the Yuba and Feather rivers, citizens worry that removal of Englebright would send silt cascading their way. That would raise the river bottom in town and raise the risk for a region that has already suffered through three catastrophic floods, including one on New Year's Day 1997.

Environmentalists say such talk is simply fear mongering, and no plan would ever go forward that increases flood risk downstream. They also insist that the stakes are too great to not at least study all possible ways to help the fish.

With the dam in place, "it's not a natural system right now," said Maureen Rose of Friends of the River, a Sacramento-based river conservation group. "Those house boaters are using a river that has been lost, most importantly to the native fish species that need it for survival. I think that outweighs a small population of house boaters."

Endangered California Dams

Environmentalists want several dams in California removed in hopes of reviving sagging stocks of salmon and steelhead. Shown here are the top targets.

(1) McCormick-Saeltzer Dam
(2) Wildcat, Eagle Canyon and Coleman dams
(3) Clough Dam
(4) Centerville Dam
(5) Englebright and Daguerra Point dams
(6) Floriston Dam
(7) El Dorado Dam
(8) Fairview Dam
(9) Rindge Dam
(10) Matilija Dam

Source: Friends of the River

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**Water interests not yet sure what Davis means when he insists on CALFED compromise**

Political Pulse, Newsletter of California Politics and Government - January 8, By Larry Lynch, staff writer

A friend-of-the-court brief is due to be filed by the state Monday [January 11] on behalf of Central Valley agricultural interests in their fight with the federal government over water allocations.

The case is known as San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority versus U.S. Department of Interior, before federal Judge Oliver Wanger in Fresno. At issue is how 800,000 acre feet of the Sacramento River-San Joaquin Delta runoff should be diverted for environmental mitigation.

The direction the state government takes in that case "may be an early signal of which way the Davis administration is going to go" on water issues, Tom Graff, senior attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund, said this week.

Or it may just be too soon for newly elected Gov. Davis and Atty. Gen. Bill Lockyer to react. At mid-week, Lockyer's press office was not even aware of the case, in which oral arguments are expected to be heard sometime in February.

More certain to be telling, in coming weeks or months, is just what Davis decides on two other major water matters:

The first is who he appoints director of the Department of Water Resources. Second -- but not less important and perhaps tied to the appointment -- is whether he moves to modify the state's position on the latest CALFED plan for salvaging the Sacramento River-San Joaquin Delta as the state's major water resource.

In his state of the state speech Wednesday, Davis gave no clear signal of the direction he intends to take on CALFED, other than suggesting he wants it to go forward and insisting that he will require "compromise from all sides."

At midweek, few in the water or environmental community were anxious to jinx a potential Department of Water Resources appointee by naming names they'd heard mentioned, particularly of someone friendly to their side on water issues.

Nonetheless, some names of possible appointees were floating around. One was Richard Katz, the former Assembly member who wanted to be head of the Resources Agency and missed out on that job. Also in the mix was former Assembly member Rusty Areias, who is said to have been instrumental in bringing a new water businessman, Keith Brackpool, into the Davis camp. But some knowledgeable observers doubt that either Katz or Areias is really on the short list for director of water resources.

Who is on that list? Two names came up: Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and a former San Diego-area water executive, and Ane Deister, a legislative liaison for the Metropolitan Water District.

Snow might be seen as a compromise appointee, because the CALFED plan his agency recently produced aims to be a consensus document, though it hasn't yet come close to achieving that status.

Supporters of the "draft framework agreement" for the CALFED released last month -- a document sometimes referred to as an interim report -- say that it balances increased conservation, water recycling and easier water transfers against such growth strategies as expanded water storage facilities.

But environmentalists say the draft agreement signals an increasing commitment to expanded water storage facilities, and they strongly object to that.

Southern California business and agricultural interests, represented by the Southern California Water Committee, take exactly the opposite view. They contend the interim report does not place enough emphasis on quick development of new plumbing and storage programs, including the infamous "peripheral canal" type structure now called "an open channel-isolated facility to be constructed east of the delta."

Closer to the middle, along with the water officials under Wilson, are some other agricultural interests in the state.

On the day the "interim" CALFED plan was unveiled, Bill Pauli, president of the California Farm Bureau Federation, told reporters that it "amounts to a starting point." He added: "The fact is, people are beginning to recognize the need for (additional) storage. That's an important component."

Timothy Quinn, deputy general manager of Southern California's huge Metropolitan Water District, suggested this week in an interview that environmentalists may come around to see the necessity for some of the elements they now want deleted from the CALFED proposals.

Quinn said he would have liked it if the CALFED process was further along but that the December document holds "a great deal of promise."

He wants the state to take serious steps to move in the direction of a flexible process for handling water usage in the delta "by giving a budget to the regulators and allowing them to manage assets that include both water and money."

Added Quinn: "I am a strong believer that we need to manage the system on a real time basis. That is, pump when the fish aren't there and don't pump when the fish are there. The (current) prescriptive regulatory approach doesn't allow you to do that."

In order to make that kind of flexible management most effective, he believes that additional off-stream storage is required.

"We are talking about finding environmentally benign places where you can store water, and then use that stored water to augment flows when and where needed for fish and for the economy of California," Quinn said.

But he conceded that environmentalists remain strongly opposed to this part of the CALFED plan, noting that their opposition might even be appropriate at this stage in the process.

On the environmentalist side, EDF's Graff responded to the CALFED draft document with a memo emphasizing ten areas of disagreement identified by the Environmental Defense Fund.

"CALFED is emphasizing new water development -- in other words, enlarged (reservoirs and) relaxation of ... pumping constraints -- without any serious scientific or technical analysis of how these projects, or others like them, would actually improve California's environmental quality, rather than contributing to its further degradation," Graff wrote in one of his points.

Graff has asked the new governor go back and take a fresh look at what's been done so far.

"You have ample time as governor to assure that work is done on an appropriate CALFED water plan, in conjunction with the United States and the concerned `stakeholders,' that better reflects your views, as opposed to those of the outgoing state administration," Graff wrote in a Dec. 11 letter to the governor.

For his part, MWD's Quinn says he would be very surprised if Davis decided to undo much of what's been accomplished so far in the CALFED process.

"I think that would be exceedingly unlikely for a couple of reasons," Quinn said. "One is, I think the secretary of the interior has put an awful lot of chips on the table and that would be a big blow for him...And I believe over time there will be a convergence of views among the stakeholders...I think the fact that a lot of people in the environmental community want to solve problems, the same as I do, is going to be a real stabilizing factor." ##

**Nevada County residents decry plan to remove dam**
Associated Press - January 16, 1999

PENN VALLEY -- Proposals to remove Englebright Dam on the upper Yuba River to help restore the spring run steelhead and chinook salmon have drawn an angry response from Nevada County residents.

About 350 people, many wearing Save Englebright Dam buttons, crowded into the Penn Valley Fire Station on Thursday evening for a meeting with officials of CalFed, the joint state-federal effort to restore the Bay-Delta area.

Dick Daniel, an assistant director in CalFed's ecosystem restoration program, said the joint agency is seeking public input on options ranging from doing nothing to removing Englebright Dam to save the two species, which have declined from about a million to a few thousand fish.

"Our objective is to get the fish off the endangered species list," Daniel said, saying that stream temperatures, which are affected by the dam, are a key factor.

One resident replied, "Does CalFed regard fish more important than human beings?" and later shouted, "Why don't you guys just resign?"

Other residents cited concerns about potential flooding, water prices and the loss of recreation facilities if Englebright Dam is removed.

"If we conclude that opening up Englebright Dam couldn't be mitigated in terms of increased risk to lives and property downstream, it goes off the table," said Daniel, who cited prohibitive costs and potential toxic chemicals trapped in the reservoirs sediment as other possible roadblocks. ##

**Nevada County may support preservation; Yuba River a hot issue**
Marysville Appeal-Democrat - January 18, by Harold Kruger, staff writer

In 1996, Nevada County supervisors said they couldn't support wild and scenic designation for the Yuba River's south fork.

Tuesday, they may change their minds.

Supervisor Sam Dardick, the lone supporter of wild and scenic in '96, has asked the board to reconsider its earlier action.

"I still firmly believe that wild and scenic designation of this section of our beautiful south Yuba River can be best protected through designation as a wild and scenic river," Dardick wrote in a recent letter to the board.

Supervisors in Yuba and Sutter counties passed resolutions a few years ago opposing the designation.

Yuba County Water Agency officials fear that a wild and scenic designation - either federal or state - will block future efforts to build dams on the river for flood control and other uses.

Water Agency Engineer-Administrator Donn Wilson said he met Friday with Supervisors Peter Van Zant and Elizabeth Martin, who support wild and scenic, Assemblyman Sam Aanestad, who represents Nevada and Yuba counties, officials from the Nevada Irrigation District and representatives from the South Yuba River Citizens League.

"SYRCL had approached (Aanestad) to support legislation on the state level to get state designation," Wilson said.

The meeting "was for (Aanestad) to gain knowledge on what the issues were," Wilson said. "At the end, he urged the (Nevada County) supervisors not to take the action they were proposing.

"Both of them (Van Zant and Martin) said this was one of the political platforms they had run on, so they were going to do it."

Wilson said a Nevada County vote for wild and scenic would have some impact.

"Probably in the big scheme not that much, but actions of a county Board of Supervisors where something is proposed have some weight," he said.

Rep. Wally Herger, R-Marysville, voiced his concern about wild and scenic in 1993.

Herger, in a letter to Yuba County officials, said "such a designation could substantially reduce our flexibility in providing for increased water supplies and additional flood control capability. I also fear that such a designation could adversely impact private property owners along the river."

SYRCL, which has worked since 1983 to obtain the wild and scenic designation for the river, posted information on its Internet site and distributed hundreds of postcards to its supporters urging them to attend Tuesday's session.

"This meeting is about more than a Board of Supervisors vote! We need over 500 people at this meeting to make a statement that our state representatives will not be able to ignore," the SYRCL announcement said.

"It is essential that we take this opportunity to show our overwhelming local support for the South Yuba."

Wild and scenic is a hot-button issue in Nevada County, where property owners along the river fear the designation may affect their rights. Environmentalists support the designation.

"What brought new interest to this, SYRCL feels with the changes in the state administration, with a Democratic-controlled Legislature and a Democratic governor, they've got a good chance of getting state designation approved," Wilson said.

In mid-1996, the Tahoe National Forest released a draft environmental impact statement that proposed that three rivers, including 39 miles of the south Yuba, should receive wild-and-scenic protection. The proposed Yuba designation extends from just below Lake Spaulding to Bridgeport.

Also proposed for designation were 30 miles of Canyon Creek and 45 miles of the North Yuba River.

A final recommendation to Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman is expected in a few months. It then will go to Congress.

Tahoe National Forest is managed by the Forest Service, which is part of the Department of Agriculture.

Shortly after the draft report was released, Nevada County supervisors voted 4-1 that no rivers in the Tahoe National forest should receive federal wild-and-scenic river designation.

"I see no benefit in having this designation," said then-Supervisor Fran Grattan. "I see another onerous government steamroller coming our way, and we will not be left as another flat mark in the road."

Grattan is no longer on the board.

Of the four supervisors who voted against wild and scenic in '96, only Karen Knecht remains on the board.

Dardick now has supporters in Van Zant, Martin and Supervisor Bruce Conklin.

"We all agree we want to leave the river free-flowing," Tahoe Forest Supervisor John Skinner said after the '96 vote. "That part there is no disagreement. The disagreement is should you use the tool of wild and scenic as a vehicle to achieve that. They're saying no, they do not wish to use that vehicle.

"I still have to look at that in terms of federal lands and see if it's not in fact the best way to achieve what we're all agreeing to, leave the river free-flowing."

In October 1997, Tahoe officials said they had received about 1,800 letters on the wild and scenic issue.

"Water, including flood control, water storage, local use and compensation, was the most complex issue reflected in the comments," Tahoe officials said. "Opinions were widely divergent on the proper balance between recommending designation for certain rivers, which precludes future dams, and the opportunities to maintain and develop further water resources for storage, hydroelectric generation and flood control." ##

**Letter to Editor - Setback for Cal-Fed Plan**
Los Angeles Times - January 18, 1999

Re "Water: Back to the Table," editorial, Jan. 4: Stakeholders in the Cal-Fed process have spent the last four years in attempts to achieve a consensus on a plan to improve the ecological health of the San Francisco Bay-Sacramento Delta region, in addition to improving the water management and quality of the system. And success was at hand. Cal-Fed had developed a plan that by all reasonable analysis proved to be technically the best. However, issues of water conservation, new water storage and conveyance facilities were raised. A phased approach was developed to ensure that these concerns were addressed and that all participants had reasons and incentives to stay with the project. Unfortunately, a formal agreement could not be achieved because some members of the environmental community were unyielding in their opposition to the construction of any new storage facilities.

Some mix of new storage is essential to the success of the Cal-Fed process and critical to managing California's future water resources. Urban and agricultural water users have adopted a "new day is dawning" philosophy in how California manages its water resources. We have embraced the Cal-Fed plan and agreed to reasonable, cost-effective demand management and water recycling approaches. The business community has expressed its qualified support. The environmental community now needs to reject its intransigent attitudes toward storage.

We are close to a solution. Success of the Cal-Fed process is critical to the economic stability and growth of our Southern California communities, as well as to meeting environmental goals.

**James A. Noyes, Chair**
**Public Outreach Task Force**
**Southern California Water Committee**
Ontario
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**Year begins with questions on Delta's fate**
Contra Costa Newspapers - January 7, by Paul Allen, Columnist

It's time for a little after-holiday cleanup. Put away the tree, polish off the eggnog. Apologize for what happened on New Year's. Try to find what happened on New Year's...

I ended the year with some unanswered questions, which I will share. Maybe you already know the answers. If so, enlighten me.

Delta Wetlands is a consortium of landowners and business people who propose to flood two Delta islands, Webb Tract and Bacon Island, making them private for profit reservoirs, and sell the water during dry times. In addition, they propose to seasonally flood Holland Tract and Bouldin Island, using them as wildlife habitat, to mitigate lost seasonal wetlands on the reservoir islands.

It's by far the grandest scheme to hit the Delta so far, from any private developer. The two-volume, 30-pound Environmental Impact Report, published in the fall of 1995, is bowing my bookshelf. We attended several public meetings on the project, then it faded away. Friends tell me the principals still want to do it, that plans are still moving forward.

Meanwhile, the CALFED Delta plan, as it currently stands, calls for building more reservoirs. In fact, it looks like they are close to proposing the same things Delta Wetlands does. If they do, they'll be able to use eminent domain laws to take whatever property they need, and they won't have to show a profit for stockholders.

So, my question is: Is anyone going to make reservoirs out of any Delta islands? If so, who? If it's the government, will Delta Wetlands get anything for all its work and research?

Next question: How can Bethel Island have any say about what kind of housing project gets built under the name Delta Coves? The Army Corps of Engineers issued the permit this July for Delta Coves to breach the levee and build canals, a la Discovery Bay.

Somewhere along the twisted path to final permits (this goes back 20 years), Delta Coves sued all the government agencies involved in blocking their way. In particular, they won a gag order forbidding Bethel Island Municipal Improvement District from saying anything about the project.

Now it's 1999, they have permits, but they have no plans, no money, and no builder. It's on the auction block. What would happen if Ken Hofmann, or someone worse, buys the project? Who has the clout to make sure they build something we can live with?

And how about them mitten crabs? When will Fish and Game and the California Health Bureau finally admit they are safe to eat and issue permits that allow commercial harvesting? There are no cases of lung fluke (a parasite they carry in some parts of China) in any Delta mitten crabs. They haven't found a snail to complete the life cycle of the fluke. And it's way too late to try and contain the critters; they're epidemic from San Jose to Calaveras County. The sooner we start eating and exporting mitten crabs, the better off we'll be.

Footnote: The Planning Commission of Hunan Province in China, has been experimenting with ways to industrially breed and culture mitten crabs since 1983. I guess they've eaten theirs up.

Not a question, just a raised eyebrow. Over at UC-Davis, they've built a fish treadmill. They put 20 to 50 fish at a time in the treadmill, a 20-foot diameter tank with rotating paddle wheels to simulate current. A three-horsepower motor like an amusement park ride spins the paddles, and the fish ride around and around.

Seriously, the thing has a purpose, other than making Delta smelt seasick. They use it to test the best shape and placement of fish screens in waterways. If the CALFED plan is implemented, we'll have plenty of fish screens in the Delta.

In fact we'll have fish screens, fish ladders, new and improved habitat, and more people keeping track of our fish. All this stems from Category III in the 1994 Bay/Delta Accord. Category III deals with non-flow factors impacting fisheries. It's already happening.

Sixty million dollars was approved last year from state Proposition 204 funds, and the Feds pledged $430 million over three years. The Ecosystem Round Table, a sub committee of the Bay/Delta Advisory Council, picks the programs to be implemented.

If you'd like to be on their mailing list, write CALFED Bay-Delta Program, 1416 Ninth St., Suite 1155, Sacramento, Ca. 95814. They'll be choosing new projects this spring.

Oh! Happy New Year. ##

**Bureau may lease Madera property**
*Fresno Bee - January 18, By Jim Orr, staff writer*

MADERA RANCH - The proposed Madera Ranch underground water bank apparently has stumbled off the fast track into a quagmire as big as, well, itself.

All sorts of vague scenarios have clouded the project - which would be three-quarters the size of Millerton Lake - since government financing slipped away and opposition mounted late last year.

And the water bank's ownership - public or private - remains undecided.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which oversees water delivery in the Central Valley, has toned down its desire to purchase the 13,600 acres in western Madera County and says it would consider leasing the land to get the venture moving.

That's what property owner Heber Perrett, a Stanislaus County businessman, has sought since proposing the project in 1996 to ease California's water crunch. He wants to build and operate the water bank and lease it to the government or another investor, such as the Trust for Public Lands.

Perrett would not say whether he would consider selling. And maybe, he says, he would farm the land if the bureau refuses to lease it.

Perrett says his negotiations with bureau officials are "all about money" - the value of Madera Ranch and the water stored there that would be sold to water districts.

Asked recently to estimate project costs, bureau spokesman Jeff McCracken cited Perrett's original proposal: a 20-year lease at $14.8 million a year, plus $400,000 in annual operation costs.

McCracken says the bureau would cover that investment "in theory" by selling 70,000 acre-feet of water a year to water districts at $225 per acre-foot. An acre-foot contains 326,000 gallons of water.

Last October, the bureau projected start-up costs of $90 million to $120 million to buy the land, build canals and drill wells for the water bank.

But bureau officials abruptly abandoned those figures after a backlash in Madera County about the water bank's feasibility. Their new position was that the land was overpriced and further study was needed.

"At some point, the money issue will be very important," McCracken said. "We must determine how those costs will be met."

Perrett says the unused Madera Ranch flatlands, which are in their natural state, would be worth $130 million if he made the ground suitable for growing crops.

He bought the land for $8 million in 1991, according to bureau documents obtained by the Madera Ranch Oversight Committee. The group includes local farmers, residents and water district officials who oppose or question the project.

The committee says the water bank could kill farm crops, lower property values, increase water-pumping costs, and drain and contaminate local ground water.

Several local, state and federal officials agree that such issues must be resolved. They include U.S. Rep. George Radanovich, R-Mariposa, who nearly introduced legislation last summer for $147 million in federal financing for Madera Ranch and other California water projects.

The Calfed Bay-Delta Program, a delta-restoration program overseen by the state and federal governments, also shelved a $14.5 million contribution because of project questions.

Perrett blames a small group of farmers for spreading misinformation to derail the project. He and bureau officials say the water bank would be safe and its technology is proven.

A number of political and environmental groups support water banks because they are less expensive than reservoirs and considered nature-friendly.

For now, the bureau is working with the oversight committee and its hydrologist to outline a study on water bank costs and potential impacts on the surrounding area.

The committee complains that a previous project study was inconclusive.

"I can't trust them Reclamation officials completely, but so far I can't complain," said committee leader Dennis Prosperi, a farmer near Madera Ranch. "They've agreed to jump through all the hoops we've presented to them." ##