



NEWS

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STATE AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE PLAN TO IMPROVE WATER SUPPLY, WATER QUALITY AND RESTORE DELTA HABITAT

Sacramento, CA - California's long tradition of fighting over water may be relegated to the history books. Governor Gray Davis, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today announced an Action Plan to address California's pressing long-term water needs and ensure that environmental protection, water quality, and water reliability are improved for all Californians. *California's Water Future: A Framework for Action* was issued today. Federal and State officials are seeking further input from interested parties.

"As the largest comprehensive ecosystem restoration effort in the world, the CALFED Action Plan will generate significant economic and ecosystem benefits for the State of California," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. "This Action Plan represents the culmination of several years of federal-state and stakeholder cooperation and a significant milestone for one of the Administration's top priorities. It establishes a blueprint for continued prosperity and environmental stewardship in this pace-setting State."

The historic plan focuses on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and pledges to restore the Bay-Delta ecosystem; improve water quality; enhance water supply reliability; assure long-term stability for agricultural, urban, and environmental uses; and provide long-term protection for Delta levees. The plan promises benefits to the environment, California's economy, and to urban and agricultural users.

"This is an unprecedented commitment to ecosystem restoration, environmental preservation, and new smart storage of water. It can bring more certainty for farmers, mechanisms for improved water quality for those who drink the water, a more adequate supply for Silicon Valley, and the development of a system that is more balanced," said U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, who played an integral role in the development of the Action Plan.

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The Action Plan integrates actions from several state, federal, and regional water management and ecosystem restoration efforts, including the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Basins Comprehensive Study, and the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program.

The long-term plan relies on several key components that incorporate a high level of stakeholder participation and a strong commitment to continuous, independent scientific review of actions and decisions.

While the proposed CALFED plan will take years to implement, Gov. Davis, Senator Feinstein, and Secretary Babbitt today focused on proposed actions to take place over the next seven years – Stage 1 of the program. Funding will be provided by state and federal appropriations, California Proposition 204 – passed in 1996 – and Proposition 13, which passed earlier this year, local contributions, and a water user fee to be developed through State legislation. The Action Plan calls for immediate implementation of specific significant short-term actions, and ultimately calls for over \$8 billion dollars to be invested over the seven year period.

Highlights of the plan include:

- Ø An Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) that is the largest comprehensive restoration effort in the world. The ERP will fund hundreds of restoration projects in the Delta, the Sacramento River meander corridor, and Bay-Delta tributaries with a reliable source of funding. This effort will improve all aspects of environmental quality in California, including restoring the ecological health of the Bay-Delta and its tributaries, improving water quality, and improving habitat conditions for fish and wildlife.
- Ø The creation of an Environmental Water Account (EWA). The EWA is an innovative new feature of the plan that will be established for the protection and recovery of fish, including those listed under the Endangered Species Act. The EWA will ensure that the environment is provided with its own dedicated water supply and will help avoid conflicts with other water users.
- Ø Significant new investment in CALFED's Watershed Program through a grant program to fund local projects that contribute to CALFED goals for ecosystem restoration, water quality improvement, and water supply reliability.
- Ø Significant new investments in storage projects to enhance operational flexibility and improve water quality. The proposed storage projects will increase water storage by 1.5 million acre-feet, with near-term focus on groundwater and conjunctive use projects in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, raising Shasta Dam, expanding Los Vaqueros Reservoir, leveraging storage in San Luis Reservoir with the construction of a new bypass canal system, and in-Delta storage.

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- Ø Improvements and modifications to the water conveyance system through the Delta, which would enhance operational flexibility without significant plumbing changes. Proposed actions include new fish screens at state and federal pumping plants, operable barriers in the South Delta, an intertie connecting state and federal pumping facilities, and enhancing the pumping limits and capacity at the State Water Project pumping facility.
- Ø Significant investment in water quality programs to continuously improve Delta water quality for all users. Actions include developing a Bay Area blending/exchange program, addressing drainage problems in the San Joaquin Valley, implementing a source water protection program, and investing in treatment technology development.
- Ø Significant investment in loan and grant programs for agricultural and urban water use efficiency and conservation measures that will result in 1.3 million acre-feet of water savings, significant development of water recycling capitol improvement projects, and significant investments in the Delta levee system maintenance and improvements.
- Ø Provide regulatory certainty to water users under the federal and state Endangered Species Act for the first four years of Stage 1, based on the availability environmental water assets and investments provided by existing legal requirements, the EWA and the ERP.
- Ø Provide improved long-term and short-term water supply reliability through integration of storage, conveyance, operational flexibility, EWA, water use efficiency, conservation, water quality, land retirement, and water transfers programs. In the first four years of Stage 1, these actions, taken in partnership with affected users and other stakeholders, will allow for meeting water supply targets for south of Delta CVP agricultural water service contractors.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program was established with the execution of the historic Bay-Delta Accord in 1994. The Accord established the basis for a truce in the regulatory water wars. The CALFED process is an unprecedented collaboration among state and federal agencies and the state's leading urban agricultural and environmental interests. Its mission is to develop a long-term, comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system, the intricate waterways created at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and the watershed that feeds them.

Through CALFED, the State and the Federal governments have been engaged in an intensive five year study period. In June 1999, CALFED released a draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) outlining its draft plan for restoring ecological health in the Bay-Delta,

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providing water supply reliability for all beneficial uses, and improving water quality. With today's announcement, the Governor and the Secretary are moving from study to action. The next steps include the release of a final EIS/EIR later this summer, followed by the execution of a final Record of Decision by the Secretary and the Governor.

The Bay-Delta system is a critically important part of California's natural environment. It supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians, irrigation water for more than 7 million acres of the world's most productive farmland, and supports over 450 fish and wildlife species.

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