

CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

May 25, 1995

The San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary is a critically important part of California's natural environment and economy. In recognition of the serious problems facing the region and the complex resource management decisions that must be made, the State of California and the federal government are working together to stabilize, protect, restore, and enhance the Bay-Delta Estuary.

Basis for Cooperation

State-federal cooperation was formalized in June 1994 with the signing of a Framework Agreement by the involved state and federal agencies. The state agencies include the Resources Agency, the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Fish and Game, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the State Water Resources Control Board. Federal Agencies include the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service, within the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, part of the Department of Commerce. These agencies with management and regulatory responsibility in the Bay-Delta Estuary are working together as CALFED, and will provide policy direction and oversight for the process.

The Framework Agreement pledged that state and federal agencies would work together in three areas of Bay-Delta management:

- Water quality standards formulation;
- Coordination of State Water Project and Central Valley Project operations with regulatory requirements; and
- Long term solutions to problems in the Bay-Delta Estuary.

Since June of last year significant progress has been made in all three areas. These management efforts have included close cooperation not only among State and federal agencies, but involvement of urban and agricultural water users, fishing interests, environmental organizations, business, and others. These groups--the stakeholders in resources of the Bay-Delta Estuary--play an important role in the collaborative process of solving problems.

Water Quality Standards

On December 15, 1994 state and federal agencies, working with stakeholders, reached agreement on water quality standards and related provisions that would remain in effect for three years. The agreement was based on a proposal developed by urban, agricultural, and environmental interests. Elements of the agreement include springtime export limits expressed as a percentage of Delta inflow, regulation of the salinity gradient in the Estuary so that a salt concentration of two parts per thousand (X2) is positioned where it may be more beneficial to aquatic life, specified springtime flows on the lower San Joaquin River to benefit Chinook salmon, and intermittent closure of the Delta Cross Channel gates to reduce entrainment of fish into the Delta.

A second category of provisions is intended to reconcile operational flexibility and compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Compliance with provisions of the ESA is intended to result in no reduction in water supply from what would be available for export under other operational requirements of the agreement. This will be accomplished in part by better monitoring for the presence of aquatic organisms of concern, faster interpretation of monitoring information, and immediate response in the operation of export facilities. This is known as real time monitoring.

A third category of provisions is intended to improve conditions in the Bay-Delta Estuary that are not directly related to Delta outflow. Some of these "Category III" measures may include screening of unscreened water diversions, waste discharge control, and habitat restoration. Parties to the agreement committed to implementation and financing of such measures, and estimated that a financial commitment of \$60 million would be required in each of the three years of the agreement.

The December 15 agreement is reflected in the State Water Resources Control Board's "Draft Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary" dated December 1994 and the Final Water Quality Plan, which was adopted May 22, 1995.

Operational Coordination

Operators of the California State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project recognized that compliance with endangered species protections, water quality standards, and provisions of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act would require project operations to be coordinated even more closely than in the past. To help ensure this coordination, representatives of the two projects and the other CALFED agencies meet regularly to manage day-to-day project operations. The deliberations of this Operations Group or "Ops Group" are conducted in consultation with water user, environmental, and fishery representatives.

Long Term Solutions

The third element of the Framework Agreement called for a joint State-federal process to develop long-term solutions to problems in the Bay-Delta Estuary related to fish and wildlife, water supply reliability, natural disasters, and water quality. The intent is to develop a comprehensive and balanced plan which addresses all of the resource problems. This effort will be carried out under the policy direction of CALFED. The public will have a central role in the development of long term solutions. A group of more than 30 citizen-advisors selected from California's agricultural, environmental, urban, business, fishing, and other interests who have a stake in finding long term solutions for the problems of the Bay-Delta Estuary has been chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act as the Bay-Delta Advisory Council. BDAC will advise CALFED on the program mission, problems to be addressed, and objectives for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. These citizen advisors will also provide a forum to help ensure public participation, and will review reports and other materials prepared by CALFED staff.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program will be managed by an interdisciplinary, interagency staff team and will be assisted by technical experts from state and federal agencies as well as consultants. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program will carry out a three-phase process to achieve broad agreement on long term solutions. First, a clear definition of the problems to be addressed and a range of solution alternatives will be developed. Second, to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, a program level or first-tier Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared to identify impacts associated with the various alternatives. Finally, a project-level or second-tier EIR/EIS will be prepared for each element of the selected alternative.

The first phase of work for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, developing a range of alternatives, will include extensive efforts to obtain public input through workshops and other means, preparation of a Notice of Intent and Notice of Preparation pursuant to NEPA and CEQA, and public scoping sessions to determine the focus and content of the EIR/EIS. The first phase is scheduled to conclude in early 1996 with the development of a range of alternatives for achieving long term solutions to the problems of the Bay-Delta Estuary.

For additional information, contact:

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Copies of the following documents are available from CALFED:

- Framework Agreement Between the Governor's Water Policy Council of the State of California and the Federal Ecosystem Directorate, June 1994.
- Principles For Agreement on Bay-Delta Standards Between the State of California and the Federal Government, December 15, 1994.
- Bay-Delta Advisory Council, Roster of Members, May 1995.

For information on the status and availability of a "Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary" contact:

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