



**CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM**

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March 29, 1996

Dan Nelson
San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority
P. O. Box 2157
Los Banos, CA 93635

RE: Levels of Agricultural Land Retirement

Dear Dan:

In a recent telephone conversation, you raised several concerns with the levels of agricultural land retirement included as components in CALFED's ten draft alternatives. In general, what we have tried to accomplish with the alternatives is to utilize a broad range of approaches to solve the Bay-Delta System problems. While each alternative may emphasize a different strategy, we have attempted to show a range of implementation levels of the various components. For example, additional water storage ranged from 100,000 acre feet in one alternative to over 8 million acre feet in another, with alternatives at various levels in between.

In the case of agricultural land retirement, one alternative provides for retirement of agricultural drainage lands primarily associated with water quality benefits and is estimated in the 70,000-100,000 acre range. Another alternative which attempts to resolve Bay-Delta System problems through aggressive demand management indicates agricultural land retirement in excess of 800,000 acres. However, as you pointed out, the remaining alternatives each indicate approximately 300,000-400,000 acres of agricultural land retirement. This is inconsistent with the approach of showing a range of implementation levels we have taken with other components in the alternatives. As such, we are in the process of revising the alternatives prior to the April 15 Workshop to show the water quality-based drainage numbers (70,000-100,000 acres) in more of the alternatives (instead of the 300-400,000 acres). It is our intent with this issue in general to show a broad range of how land retirement can be utilized in these strategies. It is recognized that there is a wide difference between a cooperative program which results in the retirement of less than 100,000 acres for purposes of water quality improvement and the potentially dramatic impacts associated with retirement of hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural land.

CALFED Agencies

California

The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal

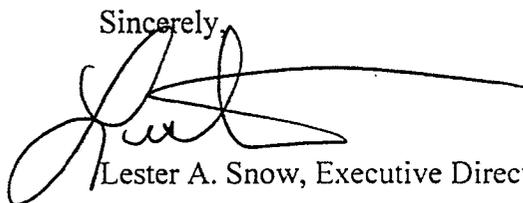
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

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Hopefully, making these modifications to the alternatives indicate that we wish to look at these issues fairly and in a balanced fashion. I know that you are still concerned with the impacts of the more aggressive numbers which remain, and look forward to working with you and others to address the benefits and impacts associated with such programs. No decision will be made or "short list" created until we better understand these issues.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lester A. Snow", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lester A. Snow, Executive Director