



**CALFED  
BAY-DELTA  
PROGRAM**

97-182

1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155  
Sacramento, California 95814

**(916) 657-2666**  
FAX **(916) 654-9780**

August 13, 1997

Bob Vice, President  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
1601 Exposition Boulevard  
Sacramento, CA 95815

Dear Bob:

Although I am deeply concerned about the issues you raised in your letter of July 9, 1997, I am glad that you have raised them at a time when we can discuss and address the issues of concern to agriculture. In the attempt to address such a complex problem in a comprehensive fashion, it has been very difficult to understand and make judgments about the CALFED Bay-Delta Program as a whole. When the individual components of a CALFED alternative are viewed individually it is not uncommon for different stakeholder groups to view it as a win/lose situation. However, the key to a balanced approach to resolving the problems of the Bay-Delta system is the integration of these individual components into a comprehensive solution such that all problems are being addressed and all stakeholder groups are receiving some benefit from the Program (consistent with Governor's water policy and the CALFED solution principles).

One of the missing ingredients for water users in general and agriculture in particular has been a clear description of the water supply features of the comprehensive solution. While the physical aspect of storage and conveyance have been described for some time, it is only recently that we have begun to discuss the performance of storage and conveyance components within an alternative. The array of storage and conveyance alternatives provide a broad range of potential impacts and benefits to agriculture throughout the Central Valley. Off stream storage in the Sacramento Valley, for example, can provide drought and average year water supply benefits to local districts within the Valley, reduce regulatory impacts on existing diverters by providing alternative fish flow water supplies, and when operated in concert with conjunctive management programs can allow for water transfers to take place without the need for fallowing and local community impacts. For San Joaquin Valley agriculture such storage can provide additional project yield as well as dry year transfers. Obviously storage in other locations can provide similar types of benefits to agriculture users. Conveyance alternatives can also provide some limited additional yield, but more importantly, can provide changes in water quality which may be beneficial, as well as

**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  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Department of Commerce  
National Marine Fisheries Service

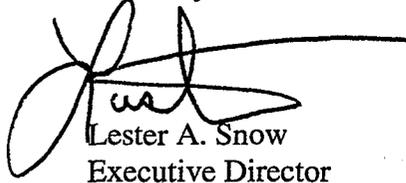
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increased flexibility in dealing with endangered species and dry and critically dry year water supplies.

Currently the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is dependent on voluntary sale of both agricultural and non-agricultural land to implement key aspects, ranging from ecosystem restoration to levee stability, and flood control to water quality improvement. These impacts must be minimized to the extent that they can. However, some integration of these items can be beneficial to all sides. As we have seen in some practical applications it is possible to improve flood management on major river systems by providing floodways which also have the effect of creating permanent agricultural easements which reduce the future loss of agricultural land to urbanization. We have also identified in the Program the need to keep certain lands in agricultural production for their ecosystem benefits. We must work hard to make sure we are integrating all these opportunities to achieve the greatest benefits with the investments that are being made in the Program.

I have attached a brief response to some of the specific issues raised in your letter. However, I look forward to our meeting scheduled for Friday, August 15 to develop a better understanding of the most useful way to address the general concerns you have raised. I am confident we are on track to develop a Program which addresses the many competing needs of the Bay-Delta system and would appreciate your insights as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director

Attachment

The following is a quick response to issues raised in the attachment to your letter of July 9, 1997. These may help in our discussion on Friday, August 15.

## 1. Ecosystem Targets (Appendix A)

### A. Water -

- As stated in the ERPP summary on page 6 of Summary of Common Programs in Phase II Alternative Description report, the desired 300,000 to 500,000 acre-feet of critical period flows would be derived from a combination of reservoir reoperation, conjunctive use, new storage, and water transfers.
- Any purchase of water from existing agricultural users would be on a willing seller and compensated basis.
- Some water used for critical flows would be recaptured and made available to existing downstream users.

### B. Land -

- The focus is placed on creating habitat through improvement of existing habitats, direct land acquisition on a willing seller basis, and development of programs that would work cooperatively with agricultural land owners to encourage different management techniques that are conducive to ecosystem needs as well as agricultural production.
- Acquisition of agricultural lands for conversion to habitat uses would be on a willing seller and compensated basis.
- Long-term conversion of lands to habitat is influenced by adaptive management. Ecosystem may respond better such that there is not the need to acquire as much land. The process is designed to be slow and evolve as evaluation and monitoring provide insights into the response of the ecosystem.
- With over 8 million acres of irrigated agriculture in the State, even if all of the 200,000 acres were originally prime ag land, this would represent conversion of only 2 percent of the total irrigated lands. However, the conversion of prime ag land is far less than the full 200,000 acres and is therefore, far less than even 2 percent.
- set back levees and by-pass strategies can be utilized to create agricultural preserves.

## 2. Water Quality

### A. Salinity levels -

- In general, dilution is not a priority strategy if water is necessary for dilution, it would most likely be acquired through water transfers or other agreements with existing water users. Such efforts would be compensated and only include willing participants
- Improvements in surface water quality would benefit agricultural users who depend on surface water as their only source. Less water would need to be applied if salinity of the source water was improved (i.e., reduced leaching requirement).
- Groundwater would not be pumped to provide dilution flows at the expense of existing groundwater users without implementation of a conjunctive use program.
- Conversion to groundwater by existing surface water users in exchange for transfer of surface supplies could create adverse impacts to groundwater supplies. Such actions would not be allowed if potential adverse impacts were determined to exist (e.g. no groundwater substitution)

B. Agricultural Drainage -

- The CALFED Program does not intend to impact agricultural leaching requirements.
- CALFED recognizes the need to maintain appropriate soil salinity for agricultural production.
- Improved salinity levels in the south Delta and in export water would greatly benefit irrigated agriculture in those areas.
- Reduced salt loads in water supplied to fields would reduce the amount of leaching required, resulting in less salt load having to be disposed and possibly more water available for other purposes, including dilution. For instance, if irrigated lands in the Grasslands Basin were able to reduce their leaching fractions because of less salt load, then they could make the "saved" water available to dilute the discharges that were still necessary.

3. Water Use Efficiency

- As part of the water use efficiency component, the CALFED Program is working to provide necessary assurances to water rights holders who may participate in water supply transfers.
- The water use efficiency program is designed to allow a voluntary, locally-directed process (the MOU) to promote the consistent analysis, planning, and implementation of cost-effective efficiency measures.
- A key objective of the WUE component is to preserve local flexibility, both in the type of efficiency measures implemented and in the use of conserved water. There is no forced reallocation to non-agricultural uses.
- Water that is truly conserved (either by the supplier or the water user) is assumed to remain in the control of the supplier or water user for their discretionary use or reallocation. This could include applying the "saved" water to additional under-irrigated lands, offsetting groundwater overdraft, or transferring to another benefactor, including the environment.
- The WUE component should provide benefits to irrigated agriculture by helping to improve the reliability of water supplies. For instance, if the same yield can be consistently produced with the less applied water as a result of efficiency improvements, then during critical periods when less is available, there should be less impact on ability to produce at full capacity.

4. System Integrity

- In many instances, flood management through use of setback levees and bypass systems can be integrated with agricultural production, similar to what occurs on the Yolo Bypass.
- The integrity of levees are of vital concern to several million acres of prime agricultural lands, both in the Delta and in areas that receive water exported from the Delta. Loss of

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some prime land as part of overall protection for other lands and water supplies may be necessary to ensure the productivity of other prime lands.

- Every effort would be made to optimize the use of set-back levees and bypass systems to achieve the best available combination of uses of the land and resulting flood management and water supply reliability benefits.

#### 5. Conjunctive Use

- Conjunctive use, as referred to by the CALFED Program, would provide necessary storage locations for improved management of annual water supply fluctuations.
- Conjunctive use programs would store water, directly or indirectly, during periods of abundant runoff and stream flow for use during periods with less than adequate supplies.
- Conjunctive use projects are not intended to simply increase the pumping from a certain aquifer.
- Improved management of water supplies can improve water supply reliability for all users during drier periods.
- Conjunctive use programs may offer opportunities for some water users or water districts to develop a transferable supply of water without reducing their internal use, nor affecting surrounding groundwater resources. The transferable supply can create a beneficial revenue stream to finance other local water supply management and efficiency projects.
- Conjunctive use does not mean the direct or indirect "mining" of groundwater.

#### 6. Water Transfers

- Water transfers would only occur on a willing buyer, willing seller basis and are likely to include agriculture to agriculture as well as agriculture to urban or environment.
- Transfers may result in more land temporarily out of production and subsequent transfer of associated water supplies to other beneficial water supply uses, including other agricultural interests.
- Water transfers could provide an opportunity to strengthen the viability of agricultural in some regions of the state. For instance, water made available through a transfer program could help generate finances for on-farm and district level improvements.
- Transfers must be structured properly to increase benefits and reduce inputs.