

January 21, 1998

FIELD(name)  
FIELD(district)  
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Dear Senator FIELD(name):

As you probably know, a consortium of State and Federal agencies known as CALFED is now developing a long-term, comprehensive solution to environmental and water management issues focused on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and San Francisco Bay. This letter will provide you with an update on where the CALFED agencies are in the process of developing that solution and will indicate our schedule for future activities.

CALFED agencies have proceeded in a straightforward manner to develop solutions for issues associated with the Bay-Delta system. The agencies began by defining the issues and problems presented by the current system and by examining the interconnections between those issues. Previous efforts to address Bay-Delta issues have suffered from a piecemeal approach.

Next, the agencies developed alternative approaches to addressing those issues and problems. In developing various alternatives, CALFED agencies became aware that some activities are essential to resolution of Bay-Delta issues. In fact, these activities are so essential that we have incorporated them as common elements into all the alternatives under discussion. These activities include efforts to restore the Bay-Delta ecosystem through creation and improvement of fish and wildlife habitat; to improve water quality through measures to reduce pollutants at their source; to improve Delta levees through development of measures to control subsidence; and to improve reliability of water supplies through increased efficiency in water use and through reductions in limitations on water diversions.

Although development of alternatives indicated that some activities should be part of any alternative, development work also led to the creation of three approaches on ways to move water through the Delta. The first approach (existing system conveyance) would make relatively minor changes to Delta channels. The second approach (modified through-Delta

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conveyance) would widen channels in the north Delta to facilitate movement of water from the Sacramento River to the export pumps in the south Delta. The third approach (dual Delta conveyance) would widen channels in the north Delta and add a separate channel (an "isolated facility") dedicated to movement of water from the Sacramento River to the export pumps. These variations in conveyance arrangements change the performance of the Bay-Delta system in the four resource areas CALFED agencies are addressing: ecosystem restoration, water quality protection, water supply reliability, and levee system integrity.

Third, the agencies analyzed the effects of these alternative approaches. This analysis covered environmental effects, as well as economic and social effects. Fourth, the agencies compared the environmental, economic, and social effects of the alternative approaches with each other, with current conditions, and with reasonable estimates of what the Bay-Delta system will look like in the future.

In February, CALFED agencies will release a report on the analysis and comparison of the alternatives. A draft programmatic environmental impact report and environmental impact statement will follow shortly after release of the report. Together, these documents will set forth the results of the agencies' analyses and comparisons and will request comment and advice from the public. Additionally, we are scheduling a series of public hearings throughout the state to ensure that the public has opportunities to present their points of view on the alternatives CALFED agencies have developed.

We expect CALFED agencies to decide in late summer or early autumn -- perhaps September to November -- on which alternative, if any, should be adopted. I would like to point out that the public comment activity will be a significant factor in CALFED agencies reaching a decision and that, through public comment, significant opportunities exist for interested parties to provide comment and advice. Further, I would like to extend a request for your comment and advice on the analysis and comparisons.

I realize this is an extremely brief overview of the current status of the CALFED effort. We will be sending along newsletters and other information as events unfold, and we are available for more detailed discussions if you or your staff wish further information. Please call me at (916) 657-2666, or Daniel McCarroll, CALFED legislative coordinator at (916) 653-5704, if you would like additional information on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

Sincerely,

Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director