



**CALFED  
BAY-DELTA  
PROGRAM**

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September 1, 1998

The Honorable Maurice Johannessen  
Chair, Senate Select Committee on CALFED Water Program  
State Capitol, Room 5061  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Johannessen:

This is in response to your letter of July 20, 1998, requesting information on development of acreage estimates in the CALFED draft programmatic environmental impact statement/environmental impact report.

As you observe, the draft PEIS/EIR contains information on land use changes and estimates of potentially affected acreages to achieve Program goals regarding ecosystem restoration and water quality protection. These land use changes would create habitat or reduce drainage from areas with identified problems with agricultural discharges, most notably selenium.

Regarding selenium in agricultural drainage, the draft PEIS/EIR (Table 5-2, page 5-6) identifies a range of 35,000 to 45,000 acres that may be subject to retirement from agricultural production. This figure is based on *A Management Plan for Agricultural Subsurface Drainage and Related Problems on the Westside San Joaquin Valley*, published in September 1990 by the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program. This report is commonly referred to as the "Rainbow Report." Table 15 of the Report (page 93) shows 37,400 acres of the Grasslands Subarea have selenium concentrations in the shallow groundwater greater than 200 µg/L (parts per billion). Our estimated range is somewhat larger than the 37,400 acres because we envision the possibility that a limited acreage outside the Grasslands Subarea could be subject to retirement for selenium reduction. I have included excerpts of the Rainbow Report for your review.

We intend to pursue several activities that may substantially reduce the number of acres that would be subject to retirement. We intend to work cooperatively with land owners to investigate and implement corrective land and water use practices. Our priority will be to maintain affected agricultural lands in production and under private ownership. We may

**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

participate in projects such as the Grasslands Bypass Project, currently being performed by local agricultural interests, that appears to hold considerable promise for managing Valley lands to reduce drainage impacts. If more intensive measures are required, we plan to work with local interests on compensated rotational fallowing, cropping changes, and irrigation system alteration. If land retirement is necessary, land acquisition will be voluntary and compensated, with due regard to impacts on local communities and economies. Depending on specific project funding, water made available through retirement of lands for reduction of selenium may remain under the control of the local water management district.

Regarding habitat creation, the draft PEIS/EIR identifies substantial acres. These acreages are based on dozens of sources, as cited in Volumes I and II of the *Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan*, a technical appendix to the draft PEIS/EIR. These sources were used to compare historic land use, existing land use, and potential for use as habitat. Historic habitat distribution was derived by computerizing United States Geologic Survey maps from 1906. This information is important in that the CALFED Program is attempting to establish ecosystem processes and habitats that will support increased populations of fish and wildlife. By general consensus, land use patterns in the early 1900's supported higher wildlife populations and abundances than at present. Returning the Delta to 1900 land use conditions is not entirely practical, however, so this historic information was compared to existing land uses. These existing land uses were identified from several specific sources including geographic information systems (GIS) maps generated by the Department of Fish and Game. These maps display State-owned and -managed lands, lands owned and operated by non-profit groups, lands under conservation easements, lands that are currently used for urban or suburban purposes, and lands that are used for roads and other infrastructure purposes. Several of the sources cited in the *Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan* describe areas that would be suitable for habitat.

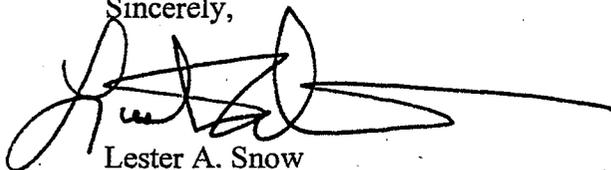
I believe it is important for the Select Committee to be aware of two factors that complicate the connection between source documents and the acreages cited in the draft PEIS/EIR. First, the draft PEIS/EIR is a programmatic document. That is, it addresses environmental and economic impacts from an entire program, rather than from any single action. Although the draft PEIS/EIR identifies general areas of the state as best suited for habitat, we have not identified specific parcels. Second, all elements of the Program are based on an adaptive management approach. In this approach, we will constantly monitor the Bay-Delta system and adapt program actions to move toward improved ecological health and water management. The numbers of acres identified in the draft PEIS/EIR are our current estimates, based on current information. As our information improves, our estimates will also improve. And our knowledge base will improve as we move into phased implementation, which is adaptive management in practice. We are now conducting discussions with stakeholders and agencies on the actions that should be taken in Phase 1 of

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the Program. These actions will help meet Program goals and will help provide information needed for decisions on further program actions.

I hope the Committee finds this information to be helpful. If you have further questions on this material, please call me at 657-2666 or Daniel McCarroll, Legislative Coordinator, at 653-5704.

Sincerely,

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

Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Sen. Jim Costa  
Sen. Dede Alpert  
Sen. David Kelley  
Sen. Richard Rainey  
Sen. Hilda Solis