

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES AND APPROACHES

ISSUE

CALFED APPROACH

CDEA APPROACH

1. LAND

CALFED has identified a maximum potential programmatic impact of 243,000 acres of important farmlands converted over 30 years. This number represents disclosure of a worst-case scenario, as required by CEQA, but is unlikely to occur in reality. The lower range of important farmlands conversion would be 129,000 acres, which is still higher than would be likely to occur (30,000 acres of both figures are for seasonal wetlands, which are intended for creation through easements on agricultural lands).

By comparison, as much as 1.65 million acres of agricultural lands are estimated for conversion to urban uses by 2040¹.

¹American Farmland Trust, "Future Urban Growth in California's Central Valley", 1995, and a straight-line projection of Department of Conservation urban conversion statistics from "Farmland Conversion Report 1994-1996" for non-Valley counties.

1. LAND

- Reduce impacts through adaptive management.
- Use easements on lands that will continue in agriculture to meet program goals.
- Develop new habitat on public lands before converting agricultural lands.
- Restore existing degraded habitat before converting agricultural lands.
- Establish levee reconstruction methods that minimize agricultural land impacts.
- Include provisions in floodplain restoration efforts for compatible agricultural practices.
- Consider increased funding of the Agricultural Land Stewardship Program to permanently preserve prime agricultural lands
- Buy out or provide technical crop assistance to growers in drainage-impaired areas.

1. LAND

- Replace converted agricultural lands on a one-to-one to three-to-one basis.
- Create new agricultural lands by supplying water to currently-unirrigated high-quality soil areas.

2. WATER

Two of the goals of the CALFED program are to provide more secure, and better-quality water to all beneficial users of Delta waters. Among the users that will benefit are agricultural operations. CALFED analyses have shown that there will be no net losses of water to the agricultural sector once all program elements are implemented. It is possible, though, that localized areas will see a reduction in water availability, which may be balanced program-wide by additional water availability to agriculture in other areas.

CALFED has treated transfers of irrigation water as an economic issue on a programmatic basis. If water loss results in a conversion of agricultural land, the document fully discloses conversion impacts.

2. WATER

- Improve the Delta ecosystem so that additional endangered species listings, which seriously impact water supply and availability, are avoided.

- Assist in the recovery of endangered species populations that rely on Delta water, thereby reducing pressure on existing water users..

- Provide incentives to both the urban and agricultural sectors for water use efficiency improvements.

- Create a framework for water transfers that protects export areas from third-party impacts, while allowing for additional irrigation water in receiving areas.

- Increase water quality to all sectors, allowing agriculture to gain better yields, and to plant higher-value crops.

2. WATER

- Create a new storage reservoir dedicated all or in part to the agricultural sector.

- "Reimburse" water districts with an equivalent amount of water for any water associated with land within the district converted to habitat purposes. This water could then be used for irrigation or sold for transfer.

- Create an Agricultural Water Mitigation Account, parallel to the Ecosystem Water Account, to make up water to agriculture for amounts that are used to create or maintain habitat.

-Provide conveyance infrastructure and contract/regulation/legislation changes to enable the above.

Note: CDFA positions are derived from oral and written CDFA staff comments.