



## Guidelines for Local Involvement – The CALFED Bay-Delta Program

### **Background**

Although the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (CALFED) has done an admirable job describing how various broad program elements will work to satisfy competing needs in the Delta, more work is needed to explain how these activities will mesh with traditional agricultural and flood control practices at the local level. It is fairly obvious that successful CALFED implementation will require significant local coordination and involvement for all program elements. Consider the following incidents which arisen since the inception of CALFED:

Surface Storage: In 1997 and 1998, private property owners on the west side of the Sacramento Valley nearly halted preliminary surface storage studies performed by DWR after field investigation commenced before affected property owners were adequately informed. While DWR has performed a commendable job in cooling the resulting furor, the initial reaction is indicative of the public outreach required to address private property issues. Access onto private property, for instance, is required to collect data and is therefore essential to nearly every CALFED program.

Ecosystem Restoration: In 1998, \$400,000 of Category III money – funded by the California Urban Water Agencies (CUWA) – was approved to study the feasibility of establishing setback levees just north of Knights Landing on the Sacramento River for environmental enhancement purposes. Because of the strong reaction towards this project by local landowners and government agencies in Sutter and Colusa Counties, CUWA funds were ultimately withdrawn for this project after a preliminary study was completed.

Fish Barrier Removal: Recent CALFED proposals to study decommissioning of existing dams on Butte Creek and the Yuba River were met with vehement local opposition and ultimately dropped after public meetings revealed the impracticality of both proposals. Both projects were developed to investigate opportunities to allow anadromous fish to migrate into areas upstream of existing dams. But project proponents were unable to assure local interests that the end result would provide a cost-effective solution and mitigate adverse impacts to the local environment and economy.

## Recommendations

Our intent is to offer constructive recommendations that will allow CALFED to implement innovative and efficient programs that do not jeopardize water rights or private property rights, and are consistent with existing land and water management activities. Although CALFED Stage 1 implementation costs may exceed \$4.4 billion, there will be a limited source of available funds to support initial work. Therefore, it is imperative that Stage 1 projects demonstrate clear benefits that justify these expenditures. We believe these projects should equally compliment farming, irrigation and flood control activities.

NCWA recommends that CALFED develop a "Local Coordination Plan" that clearly shows how all CALFED program elements will be implemented in concert with local interests. Local governments, water suppliers, conservancies and landowners should not have to wade through stacks of individual program "strategic plans" in order to determine how CALFED plans and projects will intersect with local governance. Rather, a single document should be prepared that clearly demonstrates how CALFED programs will coordinate with local requirements. Such a plan should include:

- A commitment to respect and adhere to local land and water use authority.
- Development of a representative public process to determine how specific actions are prioritized and selected - and to work with local interests to effectively implement these programs.
- Explanation of the proposed process to notify landowners affected by proposed CALFED projects.
- Establishment of a "good neighbor" policy that requires the CALFED management entity to respect and not interfere with existing land uses.

The Local Coordination Plan should address all of the key CALFED program elements – water use efficiency, water quality, levee system integrity, storage, conveyance, ecosystem restoration, watershed management and water transfers. We intend to encourage and assist CALFED in this meaningful endeavor.