



December 16, 1999

Joseph Westphal, Assistant Secretary  
Department of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon, 2E570  
Washington DC, 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary Westphal,

I enjoyed speaking with you yesterday about a possible partnership between the Corps/CALFED levee maintenance program and the Corps' extensive dredging operations in San Francisco Bay. I have worked extensively in both arenas and see tremendous potential here. Several months ago, as a staff member for Save The Bay, I worked on the attached report examining the potential to use clean Bay dredged material both to maintain Delta levees and to restore Delta habitat. I am writing to request that you support a joint Corps/CALFED investigation into this opportunity.

As you noted, there are two major obstacles to such a joint effort – cost and salinity. Save The Bay's investigation suggests that there are several potential solutions to these legitimate concerns. A cost-sharing partnership among the Corps, Bay Area dredgers and CALFED presents a tremendous opportunity to make Delta reuse affordable. The attached report addresses this issue in some detail. We believe that Delta reuse is cost competitive with other disposal options already in use.

The second obstacle to such reuse is the concern that importing Bay mud to the Delta would increase the salinity of Delta waters. Unfortunately, the attached report – thin though it is – is the most thorough examination of this issue to date. There are a wide variety of salinity management options that could significantly reduce salinity concerns, while assisting in ecosystem restoration and in efforts to prevent a catastrophic failure in Delta levees (and what would be a much greater salinity problem).

Put simply, CALFED is looking for sediment to restore levees and habitat. The Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS) for Bay dredging, on the other hand, is trying to determine how best to dispose of 200 million cubic yards of sediment in the coming 50 years. It is a tragedy that no effort has gone into investigating the potential of such an obvious partnership. I have spent a great deal of time discussing this issue with the LTMS process. The San Francisco District and other LTMS partners are very supportive of further investigation. Unfortunately, however, CALFED has not yet turned it's attention to this issue. The CALFED staff is supportive, but CALFED managers have been distracted by a variety of water policy issues. I believe that, with the Corps' support, we can persuade CALFED to work to undertake a joint investigation of what could be a very profitable joint venture. I am also sending a letter to Secretary Babbitt, with whom I also discussed this opportunity yesterday.

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I will call early in the New Year to see if you would be willing to help persuade CALFED to investigate this opportunity. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Barry Nelson', written over a horizontal line.

Barry Nelson  
Senior Policy Analyst