

May 25, 2000

Mr. Loren C. Ohm
President
San Joaquin Farm Bureau Federation
P.O. Box 8444
Stockton, California 95208

Dear Mr. Ohm:

Thank you for your letters dated March 28 and April 25, 2000 expressing the Farm Bureau's concern regarding a plan to convey water from the central Delta to the State and federal pumps near Tracy. I would like to provide some clarification with respect to the context of this central Delta intake proposal and the review process CALFED will complete before implementing any action.

As you know, CALFED's draft preferred program alternative is a comprehensive plan to deal with ecosystem restoration, water management, water quality, and levee system integrity issues. CALFED has developed strategies to deal with each of these problem areas. These strategies are interwoven and each must be viewed in context of the other strategies. CALFED's Delta conveyance strategy is to develop a through-Delta conveyance alternative based on the existing Delta configuration with some modifications, evaluate its effectiveness, and add additional conveyance and other water management actions if necessary to achieve CALFED goals and objectives. Water quality and diversion effects on fisheries are two factors that are especially important in evaluating the effectiveness of CALFED's Delta conveyance alternative. CALFED must consider and evaluate a variety of conveyance and water management actions to be certain that the through-Delta approach implemented achieves the Program's multiple objectives to the greatest extent possible.

Several months ago, stakeholders proposed a central Delta intake concept after an inquiry from Interior Secretary Babbitt regarding potential solutions to Bay-Delta issues. The concept consisted of a number of components, including new water project intakes along the San Joaquin River in the central Delta, conveyance through Delta islands, discharge to Whiskey and Trapper sloughs, and possible water service to the south Delta to provide improved water quality to south Delta water users. Additional project features were proposed for later stages of implementation, including Delta island storage -- a concept that has been under consideration by CALFED for sometime. While these added conveyance features would somewhat reduce the "through-Delta" nature of CALFED's Delta conveyance alternative, the strategy would still rely primarily on existing Delta channels and

CALFED Agencies

<p>California</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Resources Agency Department of Fish and Game Department of Water Resources California Environmental Protection Agency State Water Resources Control Board Department of Food and Agriculture 	<p>Federal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Protection Agency Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service Bureau of Reclamation U.S. Geological Survey Bureau of Land Management U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. Forest Service Department of Commerce National Marine Fisheries Service Western Area Power Administration
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maintain the "Delta common pool" concept. Relative to a fully isolated Delta conveyance approach, CALFED would still consider this modified intake concept a "through-Delta" alternative.

A screening evaluation of this central Delta intake concept was conducted by a group of agency technical representatives in recent months. This group concluded that while the Delta island storage component of the proposal would provide improved flexibility for water project operations, the San Joaquin River intake and conveyance components could have net negative effects on Delta fisheries and could somewhat degrade south Delta water quality. Furthermore, implementation of an on-island distribution system for south Delta water users would be problematic due to water rights issues and excessive cost. Due to these problems, CALFED has ended consideration of the San Joaquin River intake and conveyance component of this proposal. CALFED will, however, continue to evaluate and consider the Delta island storage component of the plan.

CALFED will continue to evaluate potential Delta conveyance features and water management actions that are consistent with the Delta conveyance strategy in an effort to provide a through-Delta conveyance alternative that achieves the multiple program objectives. Any evaluation of potential Delta configurations will include analysis of central and south Delta water quality changes and will address the needs of south and central Delta agriculture. As specific proposals are identified and advanced, CALFED will initiate appropriate project-specific environmental review as required by CEQA and NEPA. All proposed actions will go through appropriate project level feasibility studies, environmental impact evaluations, and permit approval before being implemented. CALFED is committed to ongoing stakeholder involvement throughout all planning and implementing phases and will provide full opportunity for public review and comment.

Sincerely,



Mark W. Cowin