

February 7, 1996



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Mr. Lester A. Snow
Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Lester:

The purpose of this letter is to provide the CALFED Bay-Delta Program participants with our view on how the Delta Wetlands (DW) Project can best fit into the CALFED process. In this letter we will provide our suggested format for consideration of the DW Project, including both the basic water storage project and the additional separate and unique opportunities to coordinate an in-Delta water storage project with existing facilities and operations.

The CALFED environmental analysis will have a base condition or no-project alternative that will include a description of the existing Delta and all reasonably foreseeable projects. Three good examples of foreseeable projects are the Los Vaqueros Reservoir, passive fish protection measures such as hydroacoustic barriers, and the four south Delta barriers. The basic DW Project should also be included in this list of reasonably foreseeable projects since it is likely to be permitted in the near future and the environmental documentation is readily available for you and others to review. It is reasonably foreseeable to have the basic DW Project in operation by 1998. Some of these foreseeable projects are extremely consistent with the principals of the CALFED process. They should be strongly encouraged by the CALFED team.

Another group of projects or programs, which we understand has picked up the name "core" actions, are those projects and programs that can contribute to achieving the goals of the CALFED process and do not conflict in a significant way with the short list of alternatives. Core actions appear to fit into two separate categories. First, there are fundamental actions, such as demand management, conservation and reclamation, that are universally accepted but will require ongoing efforts for the foreseeable future. Second, there are more specific actions that can be quickly accomplished and should be encouraged immediately. The unique operational features of an in-Delta water storage project fall into this second category. Some of these features can be implemented before other long-term fixes can be brought into production

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Listed below are a few examples of coordination opportunities available when the DW Project is operated in conjunction with the existing water projects. Some of these opportunities may require environmental review and Endangered Species Act consultation.

1. Reregulation or fine-tuning of upstream releases and export pumping rates.

Because Shasta Dam is five days, Oroville Dam is three days and Folsom Dam is one and a half days away from delivering water to the export pumps, planning releases for optimal pumping rates at the export locations can be tricky during times of changing meteorology. If storms are early or late, bigger or smaller, if weather is hotter or colder, reservoir releases and/or pumping rates may need to be adjusted. In-Delta reservoirs can recapture excessive releases or cover shortfalls to optimize exports and avoid violations of standards. This operational feature should provide an increase in yield to the state or federal projects.

2. Reregulation to minimize "take" impacts.

The fine-tuning benefit described above relates to water savings associated with operating this system closer to the edge, because last minute fine-tuning can be accommodated by the operation of in-Delta storage. This benefit can also be used for the fine-tuning of in-Delta operations to avoid violations of "take" provisions. Possible examples are as follows:

- a. An in-Delta storage facility could replace upstream releases to avoid transport and entrainment of endangered fisheries. If adult Delta smelt appear in the San Joaquin River south of Twitchell Island during times of relatively low inflow and high Delta export, it is likely that they will be moved toward the export pumps. An in-Delta source of water could replace upstream releases to avoid transporting Delta smelt to the export pumps. If large numbers of Delta smelt larvae appear in Georgiana Slough, the same management plan might be put into effect.
- b. An in-Delta storage facility could temporarily store upstream releases during periods of export reductions. If for any reason the pumping rate was suddenly curtailed to avoid the take of endangered species, unused reservoir capacity on in-Delta islands could capture those flows. The stored water could then be released and exported at a later, less critical time.



3. First-in, first-out operation of the in-Delta reservoirs.

An in-Delta storage facility is the most downstream reservoir within the watershed and is in a position to capture uncontrolled flows unlike any other reservoirs within the system. It makes sense to empty in-Delta reservoirs as early as possible rather than release from upstream reservoirs, because the likelihood of refilling in-Delta reservoirs might be greater than refilling upstream reservoirs.

4. Facilitate water transfers through the Delta.

There are times when water transfers could deliver water to the Delta, but pumping capacity is not available or for environmental reasons it is not prudent to pump the water from the Delta at the time it is released. Unused in-Delta reservoir capacity could be used to temporarily store this water and facilitate water transfers later in the year.

The important distinction between the basic DW water storage project and the separate and unique operational opportunities of any in-Delta water storage facility is that the basic DW water storage project can be brought online in a very short period of time, separate and apart from the CALFED process. The unique operational opportunities can be treated as part of the core actions of the alternatives being developed. The operational opportunities of an in-Delta water storage project present no significant conflicts or inconsistencies with the CALFED principals as can be seen from the DW Project evaluation. (See attached "CALFED Principals Worksheet.")

In conclusion, we suggest that the basic DW Project should be included in the CALFED base conditions and encouraged by your organization. We also suggest that the opportunities for coordinated in-Delta storage operations should be included in the core actions of the various alternatives.

Mr. Lester Snow
February 7, 1996
Page 4



We would be happy to meet with you and your staff at any time to provide further clarification of these issues and concepts.

Sincerely,

John L. Winther
President

JLW:kf
Enclosure

cc: CALFED Bay-Delta Program Federal and State Representatives
BDAC Members
State Senator Jim Costa
Deputy Secretary of the Interior John Garamendi
Secretary of State Bill Jones
Mr. James L. Easton - HYA Consulting Engineers
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