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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
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MAY 24 1996

MAY 28 1996

Mr. Lester A. Snow
Executive Director
CalFed Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, California 95814
(FAX 916-654-9780)

Dear Mr. Snow:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written scoping comments to the CalFed (California Water Council and Federal Ecosystem Directorate) Bay-Delta Program. These comments are based on the April 15, 1996, Workshop 6 Information Packet, which outlines long-term solution principles, ten draft alternative actions, and core actions that would be included in any alternative. These comments also reflect the change in strategy for alternative development announced at the May 15, 1996, Program Coordination Team meeting.

I am very pleased with your management of the CalFed long-term solution development process, which is a complex, collaborative process involving many agencies and stakeholders. The ten draft alternatives and core actions reasonably consider the full breadth of potential solutions to current Bay-Delta problems. With the analysis strategy changes announced on May 15th, the draft alternatives should be improved.

The core actions address many of the problems currently affecting anadromous fish species of particular concern to the National Marine Fisheries Service. Improving flows and temperatures, maintaining spawning substrates, modifying gravel-mining practices, eliminating barriers to fish passage, screening diversions, improving hatchery practices, and restoring riparian habitats are some of the core actions that will provide tremendous benefits to Central Valley salmon and steelhead populations.

Many of the restoration and levee improvement actions being considered for the long-term solution will require the active involvement and management of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). In particular, restoration of riparian vegetation along the Sacramento River levee system cannot be achieved without the Corps. I know that Mr. Walter Yep, Ms. Susan Ramos, and other Sacramento District staff have been informally attending CalFed meetings and workshops. However, given the key role that the



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Corps will have to play in any future restoration efforts, I think it would be appropriate for the Corps to become an official member of CalFed at the manager's level.

The draft alternatives range in scope from altering management of the existing conveyance system (Alternative A) to building a new conveyance canal from Lake Shasta to south of the Bay-Delta (Alternative I). As you try to refine the draft alternatives to a shorter list of viable alternatives, I suggest you focus on conveyance alternatives that keep water flowing in the live stream. Taking water from the stream at the lowest point downstream will preserve instream flows, thereby benefitting fisheries, and reduce the total mileage of conveyance canals, reducing construction costs. Of course, the diversion point should be located far enough upstream to ensure good water quality and prevent reverse flows. It should also be located in an area favorable to effective fish screening.

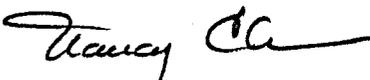
As you know, major staff commitments are necessary to coordinate interagency planning among the CalFed Bay-Delta process, current operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project, implementation of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, and the Interagency Ecological Program. I am committed to investing considerable staff resources to these efforts, given the considerable benefits to fisheries that could come from improved management of the Bay-Delta system.

Mr. Jim Lecky or I will continue to attend CalFed monthly manager's meetings. Mr. Gary Stern will attend meetings of the CalFed Operations group, the No-Name Group, the Winter-Run Workgroup, and the Delta Cross Channel Workgroup. Mr. Chris Mobley will attend meetings of the CalFed Program Coordination Team, CalFed Ecosystem Review Team, CalFed Programmatic EIS development meetings, and the CalFed Public Workshops.

If you could maintain a meeting schedule that is regular, agendaized, and well-noticed, my staff could participate more effectively. Ideally, each month a meeting calendar should be sent out to CalFed participants that sets the dates for the next two months of meetings. Changes to meeting dates, times, and locations should be minimized.

My staff and I look forward to continuing to work with you on this important planning effort.

Sincerely,


Hilda Diaz-Soltero
Regional Director