

## IRVINE RANCH WATER DISTRICT

### POSITION ON THE CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

#### Overview

IRWD provides water and sewer service to 150,000 people in central Orange County. IRWD adopted this position paper because CALFED is in the process of developing a preferred alternative to solve the problems associated with the Bay-Delta area, a vital resource for this region. IRWD is troubled about the recent shift by CALFED away from selecting a technically superior alternative, which CALFED analysis showed should include a dual conveyance facility in the Delta. Instead, CALFED has defined a phased decision-making approach which includes no clear commitment to provide water quality and reliability benefits for urban California. We feel compelled to clarify our position with this statement.

IRWD receives about 40 percent of its water supply from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. For the most part, we share Metropolitan's recent statement of needs and interests. We recognize that CALFED is attempting to develop solutions that address multiple interests, such as environmental restoration, levee improvements, water quality and supply reliability. We believe that our needs, as described in this policy, can be achieved in conjunction with the needs of the rest of the state. We also believe that continued support and consensus building by stakeholders is dependent upon CALFED's pursuit of a balanced and technically supportable solution.

#### IRWD's Shared Objectives

- **Public Health Protection** - IRWD, through Metropolitan, requires a safe drinking water supply from the Bay-Delta in order to meet current and future regulatory requirements and to protect public health. This would be achieved through reduced levels of total organic carbon (TOC) and bromide.
- **Salinity Management** - IRWD, through Metropolitan, requires source water from the Bay-Delta that is consistently low in salinity in order to implement local water recycling and groundwater storage and delivery programs, and to avoid very high energy and cost burdens to desalt unacceptably high salinity in recycled water and of salinity penalties in residential and industrial use.
- **Supply Reliability** - IRWD, through Metropolitan, must have protection for its existing Bay-Delta supplies and have access to (and conveyance capability for) wet year water for storage in order to reduce its future reliance on Delta supplies during dry years.
- **Assurance** - IRWD believes an implementation agreement must be developed to ensure efforts to achieve CALFED's Bay-Delta objectives move in parallel and on a balanced

schedule. We will not support funding and implementation of ecosystem restoration, in-stream quality improvements, and levee repairs unless commensurate funding and implementation of safe drinking water quality, salinity control, and water supply reliability also occurs.

### **IRWD's Concerns Shared with Metropolitan**

- ***Staging approach could create an impasse on the best solution long-term.*** IRWD is deeply concerned that CALFED's proposed staging approach puts off making difficult but crucial decisions regarding the long-term, best solution to the problems in the Bay-Delta.
- ***CALFED's proposed Stage 1 actions do little to improve water quality*** - Improved water quality from a CALFED solution is essential to Southern California for public health protection and salinity management.
- ***Political issues not directly addressed*** - IRWD believes that two important messages must be stated by CALFED concerning Bay-Delta issues:
  - IRWD and other member agencies of Metropolitan have made and are committed to continuing to make enormous investments in developing alternative "soft path" water supplies, which reduce Southern California's reliance on Delta water; and
  - IRWD, through Metropolitan, supports solutions that are balanced and believes that an isolated facility if it is coupled with needed through-Delta investments for ecosystem restoration, in-stream water quality, and levee stability could meet all of CALFED's objectives.
- ***Feasibility studies and environmental permitting must be conducted*** - These must be completed to ensure that required conveyance and surface storage projects will be operational when needed.

### **What IRWD Will Provide**

- ***Commitment to developing "soft path" supplies*** - As a retail agency, partially reliant for water supplies upon Metropolitan, we have and will contribute toward Metropolitan's overall commitment to CALFED regarding the development of "soft path" supplies. We have developed and will continue to develop conservation and to reduce Southern California's dry year dependence on Delta water. However, this strategy of maximizing our local water supplies is contingent upon a successful CALFED solution that improves the quality of source water from the Delta.
- ***Conservation*** - Since 1991, IRWD has conserved over 58,000 acre-feet of water in the areas of landscape irrigation and residential use. This has been accomplished through the implementation of an aggressive water conservation program which utilizes an incentive-

based water pricing system, an ascending block rate structure, plumbing retrofits, water audits, and includes a large public outreach program. The result of the last seven years has been a change in the water use ethic of IRWD customers. The District recognizes the value of these efforts and will continue to enhance and improve the various conservation tools.

- ***Water Recycling*** - During the past 30 years, the District has implemented one of the largest and most successful water recycling programs in the United States. The use of reclaimed water, which meets 15-20 percent of the District's annual demand, has proven to be a very effective approach to reduce the dependence on imported supplies and improve the reliability of the water system. Since water quality has been a key to the success of the program, the District is very concerned with the current level and any potential degradation of total dissolved solids (TDS) in the imported supplies. As a counter measure, the District is working to develop local supplies with low TDS levels to improve its water recycling program. The strategy has been partially successful but continued improvement of the imported water supplies is necessary to ensure a long-term success. The district has integrated the use of recycled water into the long-range integrated resource master plan and will continue to expand the recycled water system as the community grows.
- ***Reduced reliance on Delta water during dry years*** - These alternative "soft path" supplies are geared to reducing Southern California's reliance on Delta water during dry years. IRWD, through Metropolitan, is committed to supporting the development of a Delta operating plan that ensures Southern California's reduced reliance on State Water Project supplies during drought periods through a strategy of maximizing diversion and storage of water during wet years; but this reduced reliance will require the above stated water quality, transfer capability, and storage.

## **Conclusion**

The people of the state and of the nation have invested heavily in supporting the CALFED program. It will be a tragedy if CALFED fails to meet its objectives.

Southern California must have improved source water quality from the Bay-Delta. Our development of water management programs, such as recycling and groundwater storage, depend upon reduced salinity of Delta water. Southern California's public health protection is also at stake. Finally, unless supply reliability is improved, Southern California's \$500 billion economy, quality of life, and environment will be threatened.