

**Editorial: CalFed moves ahead
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Bipartisan cooperation and pragmatism have paid off for the California Federal Bay-Delta Program, known as CalFed. Last Wednesday the U.S. House unanimously passed a bill that clears the way for \$389 million in federal funding to keep CalFed alive.

This is a major success that is necessary to maintain the consortium of federal and state water interests with widely differing constituencies. For years urban, agricultural, recreational and environmental groups had been battling each other over California's water resources.

But for the past decade under CalFed, they have been working together on a plan to improve the Delta environment and meet the needs of the 22 million Californians who depend on water that flows into the Delta.

Without further federal funds, CalFed could disintegrate and the state would be facing a water crisis that threatened to be worse than the electricity crisis that plagued the state in the late 1990s. Thanks to efforts by Republican Rep. Richard Pombo and Democrat Sen. Dianne Feinstein, legislation stayed alive in Congress and has now been sent on to President Bush, who is expected to sign it into law. The measure authorizes numerous water projects including constructing storage facilities such as a larger Los Vaqueros reservoir, stabilizing Delta levees, conducting flood management programs and implementing water quality improvements

Last July, the House on a voice vote approved the bill to fund CalFed. The Senate version of the bill was similar, with one important exception. The House version would allow the secretary of the interior to approve water projects without congressional sign-off. Of particular concern to Pombo was authorization for water storage projects. Feinstein warned the bill would not pass the Senate with the preauthorization provision, and a compromise would need to be reached. Fortunately, Pombo and Feinstein worked together to hash out an arrangement that advances feasibility studies on new reservoirs. If the studies determine projects are feasible, the CalFed bill will require Congress to approve money for them by the end of its next full session. If Congress fails to come up with the funding, the entire CalFed program could be put in jeopardy. As a result of the compromise, Congress will have its say on prior approval of projects, but water storage becomes the "linchpin of the entire CalFed program," according to Pombo.

The CalFed bill is wholeheartedly supported by both of California's senators, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rep. Ellen Tauscher and Rep. George Miller.

The hope is that needed water storage projects can move ahead in a timely manner and receive the federal funding they deserve. Without last week's CalFed compromise, that would not have been possible.#

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