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CALFED 10-Year Action Plan Released

Changes in governance, program and fiscal management, and strategic planning

SACRAMENTO – Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman today released a 10-Year Action Plan to revitalize and refocus the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The plan was developed following a seven-month independent review of the ambitious state and federal effort to improve water supply reliability and the ecosystem of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay and Delta.

“This Plan outlines the new way CALFED will work – as an integral part of the overall California Water Plan – to bypass old stumbling blocks and forge ahead to solve crises in the Delta,” said Chrisman, who will lead the revitalized CALFED on behalf of the state.

Major areas of change include leadership and governance, program and fiscal management, a funding plan and strategic planning to deliver both short- and long-range solutions to the Delta’s problems.

Gary Hunt, chairman of both the California Bay-Delta Authority and the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee, groups that currently provide CALFED oversight and stakeholder advice, hailed the Action Plan as opening a new chapter for the program.

“The Action Plan clearly defines who has responsibility and accountability for identifying and implementing programs so sorely needed in the Delta,” Hunt said.

The independent review was conducted at the direction in May of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was concerned about criticisms of CALFED but maintained a strong belief in the Program's promise.

The Delta has increasingly been the focus of attention over the past few years, as important and unique species have become threatened and endangered and science has struggled to determine the cause. The security of commerce and communities in the shadow of Delta levees has drawn acute attention post-Hurricane Katrina and as storms and snow-melt cause water levels to put more pressure on the aging structures. And conflicting views on how to manage water resources through storage have continued.

Major components of the 10-Year Action Plan include:

- Dissolution of the California Bay-Delta Authority and creation of an Executive Leadership Council to provide Program policy direction and coordination for the Program. The Council will be established through a state/federal Memorandum of Understanding and comprised of the directors of state and federal implementing and regulatory agencies, as well as public stakeholder representatives appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior.
- Creation of a Public Advisory Committee to provide the broadest possible opportunity for stakeholder recommendations to the Leadership Council and be the conduit through which the public interest and input is channeled to Program decision makers. This advisory committee will operate under state law and is intended to replace the current federally-chartered Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee. Members will be appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, whose members will be statutorily empowered to make recommendations to both state and federal agencies.

- Actions to strengthen and improve multi-agency planning processes, track performance against investment, and improve overall efficiency and effectiveness.
- Actions to help stabilize Delta levees to prevent flooding and damage to the state's water supply and ecosystem and understand causes of the decline of open-water (pelagic) fish species in the Delta.
- Actions to guide end-of-Stage 1 decisions about delta water quality, ecosystem restoration, surface storage, and whether the "through-Delta" alternative for conveying water across the Delta should continue to be the preferred alternative.

The Action Plan also calls for a long-term planning effort involving local government agencies and stakeholders to develop a 100-year vision for the Delta. This vision would be broader than water conveyance and ecosystem restoration and would focus on all aspects of the Delta including transportation, utility corridors, recreation and land use.

In addition, the Action Plan calls for continued negotiation with Delta water exporters and others on a new regulatory framework that could include development of Habitat Conservation Plans and/or Natural Community Conservation Plans for the Delta and its tributaries.

Highlights and the complete version of the 10-Year Action Plan are available at www.calwater.ca.gov.

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The California Bay-Delta Program is a cooperative effort of more than 20 state and federal agencies working with local communities to improve the quality and reliability of California's water supplies and revive the San Francisco Bay-Delta ecosystem. The Bay-Delta plan is the largest, most comprehensive water management effort in the nation.