

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Keith Coolidge, CBDA
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(916) 561-5555**CALFED AND FARM BUREAU SETTLE LAWSUIT
OVER ENVIRONMENTAL WATER ACCOUNT***Settlement highlights role of science, protects farmlands*

SACRAMENTO – Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman and California Farm Bureau Federation President Bill Pauli today announced settlement of a lawsuit over the CALFED Bay-Delta Program’s environmental water account. The agreement allows federal and state agencies to work together with scientists and stakeholders in finding the best science available to promote delta fish health and solve problems associated with recent pelagic fish declines.

At issue was CALFED’s innovative environmental water account, through which state and federal agencies purchase and manage water to protect fish in the Delta and to replace water deliveries to farms and cities south of the Delta that otherwise could be interrupted by changing environmental conditions.

A copy of the settlement is online at:

http://calwater.ca.gov/Programs/EnvironmentalWaterAccount/adobe_pdf/Signed_Settlement_Agreement.pdf

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is an environmental treasure supporting more than 700,000 acres of farmland, more than 750 different plant and animal species, and is the source for some or all of the drinking water for two-thirds of the state’s population.

Chrisman endorsed the settlement, saying, “We welcome the Farm Bureau’s efforts to work cooperatively to better achieve our goals of environmental protection and water supply reliability.”

“This settlement agreement is an opportunity to advance our concerns about the declining pelagic fish species while protecting our farmlands from conversion and helping our family farmers,” said Pauli. “We believe that, by working cooperatively and collectively with the best science, farmers, fish and other species can coexist.”

The settlement agreement has been approved by all parties (the Farm Bureau, Resources Agency, California Bay-Delta Authority, Department of Water Resources, and Department of Fish and Game). It settles a suit by the Farm Bureau challenging the CEQA analysis for the interim Environmental Water Account that is currently pending in Sacramento County Superior Court. The interim EWA is being implemented for the years 2004-2007, while a longer-term environmental water account is being formulated and studied for the remaining period of the CALFED plan.

This year, various federal and state fisheries agencies reported an apparent decline in the population of certain pelagic fish in areas of the Delta over the last three years that requires immediate and comprehensive study. The agencies have identified funding to implement a work plan to study and address the decline.

Accordingly, the parties agreed to cooperate to seek to obtain the best science available, including efforts to seek full funding for such activities. The parties have also taken steps to facilitate the gathering and exchange of information regarding any impact of the interim EWA on farming and have established new lines of communication between state agencies and the Farm Bureau to encourage greater communication about these issues.

Finally, the Farm Bureau and state agencies have agreed on certain steps to facilitate the participation of the Farm Bureau and others in the current process for formulating and analyzing the longer term EWA.

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