



Scientists review first year of Environmental Water Account

An independent panel of scientists, engineers and legal scholars gave generally positive marks to the way state and federal agencies operated the new Environmental Water Account in 2001.

The 13-member Technical Review Panel released its report in December, following a three-day conference on the Environmental Water Account in October. Chaired by marine scientist James Cowan, the panel praised the water account managers for purchasing the full amount of programmed water – nearly 300,000 acre-feet – and using it to reduce mortality of winter-run salmon and Delta smelt at the state and federal pumping plants in the Delta.

“They praised the Environmental Water Account as being a novel experiment,” said Sam Luoma, CALFED’s lead scientist. “They praised the people who ran it.”

While the account hit a few “rough spots” during the year, Luoma said, “The remarkable thing is that the coalition stayed intact and moved forward. This was not a minor accomplishment.”

The EWA is run by a team comprised of representatives of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the state Department of Water Resources and the Department of Fish and Game.

A key component of CALFED’s Water Management Strategy, the account addresses two key problems – declining fish populations and unreliable water supplies. Its purpose is to better protect fish by making it possible to modify water project operations in the Bay-Delta and still meet the needs of water users. The EWA buys water from willing sellers, then stores and releases it as needed to protect fish and compensate water users. EWA managers coordinate with water project operators to curtail pumping to avoid harming fish, then provide water to cities and farms to compensate for the reduced pumping.

Among the science panel’s recommendations:

- Improve the flexibility of the account to respond more quickly to changing fishery and water conditions. One possibility would be to carry water over from year to year, so water in wet years could be used in dry years.

- Better define “Tier 3” or emergency water, how much is available each year, and how it is to be used. “Everybody has an opinion of what that Tier 3 water is,” Luoma said.

- Improve the biological underpinnings of the program, to better understand how the pumps affect fish and how they can be protected. That could lead to a number of performance measures to judge the effectiveness of the account in protecting fish. 

Public outreach for CALFED Los Vaqueros Reservoir studies

Contra Costa Water District is reaching out for public comment on the idea of expanding 4-year-old Los Vaqueros Reservoir in Contra Costa County. The



district, which is coordinating the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion Studies on behalf of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, conducted an agency tour of the Los Vaqueros Watershed on Nov. 14, a public workshop on Nov. 15 and a meeting of a new Customer/Stakeholder Feedback Group on Oct. 23.

“Many good issues were identified,” said

Marguerite Naillon, the district’s project manager for the studies.

A new Web site on the studies, at <http://www.lvstudies.com>, is expected to go live within a few weeks.

The district hopes to release a Project Concept Report in February or March and then begin work on a detailed feasibility study and environmental review in 2002. The district has pledged to seek voter approval of any plan to expand the reservoir.

Completed in 1998, Los Vaqueros has a capacity of 100,000 acre-feet. The Bay-Delta plan, adopted in August 2000, calls for studies on expanding the reservoir by 400,000 acre-feet to “provide water quality and water supply reliability benefits to Bay Area water users.”

Approximately 40 people attended the Nov. 15 workshop, while the tour attracted 11 representatives of

three CALFED agencies and one Bay Area water district. Most had never visited the Los Vaqueros Watershed, Naillon said.

A total of 25 people attended the feedback group meeting. The group is made up of representatives of area agencies, cities, municipal and industrial customers and other stakeholder organizations. 

Governor Davis announces \$35-million CALFED acquisition in the North Delta

Gov. Gray Davis on Nov. 20 announced a \$35-million state grant to acquire Staten Island, a 9,200-acre wildlife sanctuary in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Funded by two major water bonds, this important project is the largest to date under the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. Thirty million dollars will go toward the actual purchase, while an additional \$5 million is earmarked for planning and improvements.



“This project is a strong investment in California’s water future,” Governor Davis said. “It achieves a broad range of goals that CALFED was created to accomplish. It protects California’s water supply, improves flood protection, restores and protects our environment and resources, while helping to preserve highly productive farmland.”

The Nature Conservancy is using state funds to purchase Staten Island, one of California’s largest havens for sandhill cranes. The Nature Conservancy will continue to manage it as a wildlife-friendly farming operation that will serve as a preserve for a wide variety of waterfowl. In addition, possible temporary inundation of all or part of the island in the future will help reduce the threat of catastrophic flooding in the north Delta.

The California Resources Agency and one of its constituent departments, the Department of Water

Resources, provided the funding from two state water bonds, Propositions 204 and the Water Bond 2000 (Proposition 13), which were approved by voters in 1997 and 2000, respectively.

“By protecting this island and providing a winter home for many species of waterfowl, we are fulfilling a commitment made by the Davis administration to protect the natural resources of the San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta for generations to come,” Secretary for Resources Mary D. Nichols said. “It is fitting that sandhill cranes will greatly benefit from this important project. Cranes the world over are a symbol of fidelity and happiness.”

The Nature Conservancy, one of the nation’s leading conservation organizations, acquired the land from Pacific Realty Associates of Portland, Oregon. The Conservancy has pledged to continue Staten Island’s long-standing agricultural practices, raising corn, wheat and other crops while providing shallow seasonal wetlands for cranes and other waterfowl and migratory birds. The group will also be working with DWR and other CALFED agencies on a flood-protection plan for the north Delta that may involve setback levees on Staten Island or other measures.

“The Nature Conservancy is pleased to have brought together a convergence of interests ranging from habitat, farming and water supply protection to flood control,” said Graham Chisholm, Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy of California. “We look forward to working with our partners – CALFED, the Department of Water Resources and the local community – to ensure that Staten Island becomes a successful model for future conservation programs in the Delta.” 

NEWS is a publication of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program Public Affairs Office designed to keep the public informed of the CALFED activities. For questions, comments, or to be added to the mailing list, write to 1416 9th Street, Suite 1155, Sacramento, California, 95814, or phone (916) 654-7137.

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New Bay-Delta advisory group conducts first meeting

A newly appointed citizens group that will advise state and federal agencies carrying out the Bay-Delta plan conducted its first meeting Dec. 5 in Sacramento.

The Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee will meet at least twice a year to advise the Secretary of the Interior and California's Governor on implementation of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

Bennett Raley, the Interior Department's Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, and California Resources Secretary Mary Nichols announced appointment of the committee in October. The 28 members represent virtually all regions of the state and a variety of environmental, urban, agricultural, Tribal and community interests. (A list of the members and other information can be found at the CALFED Web site, <http://calfed.water.ca.gov/bdpac/BDPAC.html>.)

Nichols and Kirk Rodgers, acting regional director of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, opened the meeting and appointed chairman Gary Hunt, a senior advisor with California Strategies LLC in Irvine, Ca.

Patrick Wright, director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, highlighted the program's accomplishments, discussed the program's structure and decision-making, and reviewed the role of the advisory committee.

The committee formed a number of subcommittees to review various aspects of the program, including watershed management, drinking-water quality, water-use efficiency, environmental justice, ecosystem restoration, and water management. ☐

Big increase in ecosystem grant requests

Officials of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's Ecosystem Restoration Program are reviewing some 260 applications seeking more than \$420 million in funding for projects aimed at improving the ecological health of the Bay-Delta watershed.

The funding requests in the 2002 Proposal Solicitation Package represent an 80 percent increase over the 2001 grant requests. The CALFED Record of Decision, adopted in August 2000, commits CALFED agencies to expend \$150 million annually for ecosystem restoration.

The final grant awards will be announced in the spring, said Dan Ray, grant coordinator for the Ecosystem Restoration Program.

Ray attributed the increase in applications to a number of factors, including the word getting out that CALFED funds are available for state-of-the-art ecosystem work.

"The opportunities provided by the program are becoming more apparent," he said.

In addition, after several years of funding studies and preliminary plans, the Ecosystem Restoration Program is getting more requests to fund work on the ground, and that's a lot more expensive.

A complete list of the applications can be viewed at the CALFED Web site, at http://calfed.water.ca.gov/ecosystem_rest.html. ☐

New Water Use Efficiency Grant Applications Now Available

The Consolidated Water Use Efficiency 2002 grant application, or Proposal Solicitation Package (PSP), is now available at www.water.ca.gov. Applicants may submit proposals for a Proposition 13 Urban Water Conservation Capital Outlay project, an Agricultural Water Conservation Capital Outlay Feasibility Study project, or a California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Water Use Efficiency project with this package. Proposals are due March 1, 2002.

This PSP has been developed through a partnership among DWR, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The package will also be available at <http://www.calfed.water.ca.gov>.

Although there is currently no state funding for the DWR Water Use Efficiency component of this PSP, the process is moving forward in order to facilitate and expedite the funding of viable projects if money does become available. Informational workshops will be held at the following times and places:

Tuesday, January 22, 2002	Thursday, January 24, 2002
10:00 am - 12:30 pm Modesto Irrigation District 1231 Eleventh Street Modesto, CA	10:00 am - 12:30 pm The Metropolitan Water District of So CA 700 Alameda, Rm 2-145 Los Angeles, CA
Wednesday, January 23, 2002	Friday, January 25, 2002
10:00 am - 12:30 pm Contra Costa Water District 1331 Concord Ave. Concord, CA	10:00 am - 12:30 pm Chico Municipal Center 421 Main Street Conference Room 1 Chico, CA

If you have any questions, please contact Marsha Prillwitz at the California Department of Water Resources, 901 P Street, Third Floor, Sacramento, California, (916) 651-9674, marshap@water.ca.gov. ☐



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The mission of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is to develop and implement a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system.

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