

Agenda Item: 4
Meeting Date: June 21, 2007

BAY-DELTA PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

End of Stage 1 Assessment

Description: As envisioned in the CALFED Record of Decision, the CALFED Program is preparing an assessment to determine if the current through-Delta approach for conveying water across the Delta to the State and Federal export pumping facilities is meeting the Program's goals and objectives. New information related primarily to levee integrity and ecosystem quality and fishery recovery raises significant questions about the ability of the through-Delta conveyance system to meet program goals and objectives.

Recommended Action: Substantial interactive discussion with the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee members.

Collectively, we'll discuss the information in this "Staff Report," the likelihood of the Preferred Program Alternative meeting CALFED objectives in the future and staff recommendations on how the Program should proceed. In the end, the group will develop its own recommendations on how the program should proceed.

Background

1. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is nearing the end of the first seven years (Stage I) of an ambitious 30-year plan, described in the August 2000 Record of Decision, to restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta, the hub of California's water system.
2. The single most important difference between CALFED and past efforts to solve problems of the Bay-Delta is the comprehensive nature of CALFED's interrelated resource management strategies. The CALFED agencies determined that the four problem areas of water quality, ecosystem quality, water supply reliability, and levee system integrity were interrelated, and that problems in any one program area could not be solved effectively without addressing problems in all four areas at once. Agencies also agreed that any solution must satisfy certain CALFED "Solution Principles," which include being "implementable," and "reducing conflicts in the system."
3. The Preferred Program Alternative chosen in the ROD employs a through-Delta approach to conveyance. The agencies agreed that this approach would be

monitored and then assessed at the end of Stage I to determine whether it was meeting goals and objectives, consistent with the CALFED Solution Principles. In the event that the chosen conveyance approach was not working, the agencies agreed, consistent with the Program's overriding principle of adaptive management, to evaluate additional alternative conveyance actions and then make a decision to proceed accordingly.

4. The importance and urgency of CALFED's End of Stage I assessment of the through-Delta conveyance approach has been acutely heightened by the confluence of a series of unanticipated events that in recent years has led to a crisis in the management of the Delta.

5. Populations of certain Delta fish species have declined precipitously. As a result, water operations have been adversely impacted and certain large water supply projects envisioned in the ROD are currently not implementable. The number of major Delta-related lawsuits has increased, including suits challenging the regulatory underpinnings of the joint state and federal water operation system. On top of this, recent events including the lower Jones Tract levee failure and Hurricane Katrina have sharpened the focus and concern over an aging levee system, and unsettling new scientific studies suggest that global warming and other natural forces will alter the landscape and hydrology of the Delta in ways that were clearly not anticipated in 2000.

6. In light of all of these new factors, the Governor in 2006 established a major new effort called Delta Vision to write a strategic plan for a long-term sustainable Delta that includes a durable and reliable water conveyance approach. State and federal agencies and stakeholders have also recently embarked on a major new planning effort for the Delta ecosystem and species conservation (the Bay Delta Conservation Plan) that are addressing the options for a new conveyance system and other related restoration strategies and is intended to lead to a major new course of action in the Delta that will secure the relevant regulatory approvals and predictability that is now absent.

7. Consequently, CALFED's End of Stage I assessment of the water conveyance approach chosen in 2000 is necessary, not only to set the course for the future of the CALFED Program as it enters Stage 2, but also to provide vitally important information to the Delta Vision and the BDCP processes as they are finalized over the course of the next several months.

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