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September 23, 1999

CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 9th Street
Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Snow:

The California Farm Water Coalition appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments regarding the CALFED Revised Phase II Report. The Coalition is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public regarding the social, economic and environmental benefits of irrigated agriculture. Our membership includes water districts, agriculturally related businesses and organizations, and individual farmers and ranchers from throughout California, including within the CALFED solution area.

The CALFED program was one that was designed to help all of California's water users to get better together. Unfortunately, what has been the result thusfar, is the appearance of a massive shift of water supplies from agriculture to urban and environmental water users. The fact that willing sellers exist and have already participated in CALFED's farmland retirement program does not absolve the Program of its responsibility to conduct meaningful environmental review at the time farmland is proposed for retirement. The California Environmental Quality Act is clear in its intentions to protect prime agricultural resources and CALFED must adhere to CEQA provisions requiring review and mitigation.

How much water is necessary to sustain the current level of abundance of food and fiber enjoyed by consumers, both here in the United States and around the world? In truth, California agriculture uses just 43 percent of the state's developed water supply. And in doing so, produces over 300 commercial crops, is responsible, either directly or indirectly, for 10 percent of the state's jobs and has a $100 billion statewide economic impact. Urban water use of the same supply is 11 percent, however the environment uses the biggest share, 46 percent, according the State Department of Water Resources Bulletin 160-98.

Further reducing agriculture's share would devastate local communities, take valuable land out of production and reduce the habitat benefits agriculture provides when wildlife feed on crops. It is no secret that agricultural lands create a beneficial buffer between wildlife habitat and urban areas. In fact, even the status quo is not enough. Without INCREASES in the state's water supply, agricultural and urban users who already gave up water in the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord will continue to suffer. It only makes sense to increase supplies to meet the needs of the expected increase in population of 15 million people over the next 20 years.

Simply rearranging California's water supply is not the answer to our long-term water supply problems. CALFED must address the need for additional water storage now, not in seven years when water supplies will be at a severely critical point. Any plans designed to meet the future needs of

California environmental, urban and agricultural users must include new storage facilities. Delaying the planning and construction of these necessary projects only pushes the real problem of inadequate water supply further down the road.

There is a great hue and cry about surface storage projects because of their detriment to the environment. To the contrary, these projects can be developed and constructed in the manner such as San Luis Reservoir – off stream and away from areas of important environmental resources.

There comes a time when you have to draw a line between sensitivity and sensibility.

CALFED needs to play a stronger leadership role in the disposition and management of the state's water supplies. Federal agencies have demonstrated in the past, such as this year during the Delta Smelt pump crisis, that they are willing to bypass local resource managers and ignore the harm associated with undependable water supplies in order to accommodate single-species management practices.

People have been left out of the CALFED equation. Real lives will be negatively impacted if steps aren't taken now to provide adequate water supplies now and in the future. A study conducted in the community of Mendota that centered on the drought from 1987 to 1992 concluded that the entire community was adversely impacted as a result of reduced water supplies to agriculture. The ripple effect, if you will, goes far beyond the fence at the edge of the farm when agricultural land is taken out of production. The losses include businesses and individuals that depend on agriculture for their livelihood as well as the loss of vital tax revenues in already financially strapped communities, not just the producers of hundreds of food, fiber and nursery crops that sustain fully 10 percent of California jobs.

Although the CALFED process is well into its fourth year, a great deal of work must be accomplished if we are to meet the current and future water needs of <u>all</u> Californians. In order to accomplish this, it seems imperative that Governor Davis and Interior Secretary Babbitt must actively re-engage themselves in the process if we are to hope for a balanced, effective solution. California cannot afford to wait. We owe it to those who provided for us in a previous generation and we owe it to those in the future who are depending on us to leave the state and its resources better and more productive than when we received them.

Yours very truly,

Mike Wade
Executive Director