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El Dorado County Farm Bureau
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September 23, 1999

CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, #1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Comments on Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report

Gentlemen:

Having attended yesterday's Public Hearing in Sacramento, we are compelled to state our concerns with regard to the Bay-Delta Draft EIS/EIR. We have grave concerns that the following points be remembered when you deliberate the future of California's water:

- Fully 90% of the farms in California are operated by families. Many of the farms have been operated for several generations by people who have worked hard to improve productivity while using the same amount of available water resources. By eliminating productive farmland you are not only affecting our food supply negatively but also you are putting families out of business. These actions will be irreversible, with a negative impact on the surrounding communities, the distribution system, and the consumers.

- California farmers produce an enormous supply of healthy, safe, food that is used by millions. They are the most certified and regulated group of workers in our nation trained to apply pesticides safely, to protect the watershed, to grow healthy meat, and to protect the habitat. Food is not an optional commodity, and our farmers have proven their dedication to improving methods of production and supply while consistently marketing excellent food. With increasing demands of future generations food productivity will have to **increase** not **decrease** which is what will happen if existing farmland is fallowed.

- Water storage for farmers is the key to future successes in farming. The farmers are caught between a rock and a hard place. If they are inefficient in their water use they are fined, and if they are too efficient in their water use they get no break on the amount they must pay for their allotment. There is no way to effectively "bank"

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their savings, and the farmer can be informed at any time that he won't be receiving his full allotment of water. The double standards are phenomenal, and in any other business would be characterized as strongarm tactics, which would not be allowed to continue. An equitable method of water allocation and management of stored water is necessary to ensure the future success of farming in California.

CALFED's mission should be to protect the interests of the majority of Californians with an eye to the future. There is no opportunity to "do it again until we get it right". This is a critical moment in the future of both California's and the nation's food supply. With increasing population and increasing demands for food we must develop a comprehensive approach which **protects** the existing farmlands, not putting them at risk of failure. This is not just a matter of protecting certain species, or watering nicely landscaped yards, but more a matter of ensuring a viable food supply for future generations. We request you not lose sight of these critical matters as you plan for our future.

Sincerely,

Sharyn Felts

Sharyn Felts
President, Board of Directors
El Dorado County Farm Bureau

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cc: California Farm Bureau Federation