1294 SEP 23 1999

Lester Snow, CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM 23-Sep-99

I sincerely appreciate the effort that has gone into the CALFED process.

I think that you are on the right track as far as farmland conversion to wildlife habitat.

I attended the hearing in Sacramento September 23, 1999. Several issues were raised that should be drawn to your attention.

1. Farmland conversion will not be the tragedy as portrayed by the farming community. Examples abound where willing farmers have sold land to developers. Impacts to the farmers, suppliers and farm workers has rarely (never?) been an issue. Land has historically been idled as part of the government's pricing supports and land conservation. Again, the farming community has not made this an issue.

2. The farming community may actually be in a better position with a portion of the farmland converted to wildlife habitat or permanently idled. All things being equal, the same water supply spread among fewer acres will offer more flexibility for managing the water resource.

3. Additional storage will likely be very expensive on an incremental basis. This correctly is a last choice in terms of an economical solution. The cost will be born by the taxpayers. The farmers should recognize that they are part of this community. CALFED has a fiduciary responsibility to the Federal and State taxpayers.

4. Conservation may be an inappropriate tool for agriculture. By encouraging (subsidies, etc.) processes such as drip irrigation and misters perennial crops such as grapes and orchards will be planted. This could reduce the flexibility in a dry or critical year in meeting water requirements. Historically low value crops were fallowed or underwatered. Pastures were allowed to go dry. By converting the bulk of our farmland to such perennial crops such flexibility will be lost. Crops such as grapes and orchards require a large investment ($10,000 + /acre). This will necessitate a guaranteed water supply. A cursory review of runoff records suggests that this is a dangerous course of action.

I wish you the best in restoring the status of the Delta.

Sincerely,

David Breinke

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