

**MWD**

METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

March 31, 1998

To: Board of Directors (Water Planning and Resources Committee--Information)

From: *for* General Manager

Edward J. Meo III

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Subject: Update on Release of Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report /
Statement by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program released its Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft PEIR/EIS) on March 16 for public review. Completion of the Draft PEIR/EIS represents a major milestone for the CALFED Program.

The draft environmental documentation identifies three main programmatic alternatives, and provides detailed information on their performance including each of the "core programs" which vary in scope with each alternative. The public comment period will last 75 days (until June 1, 1998), during which CALFED will hold 12 Public Workshops throughout the State. A preferred alternative is anticipated to be identified in Summer 1998, with CALFED scheduled to issue a Final Programmatic EIR/EIS in Fall 1998.

DETAILED REPORT

Description of Environmental Documentation:

CALFED's Draft PEIR/EIS materials contains approximately 3,500 pages of technical and descriptive information in the following volumes:

1. *Programmatic EIS/EIR Executive Summary*
2. *Phase II Interim Report*
3. *Project Alternatives*

4. *Implementation Strategy*
5. *Program Goals & Objectives*
6. *Watershed Management Strategy*
7. *CALFED Phase II Storage & Conveyance Refinement Process Overview*
8. *Developing a Strategic Plan for Ecosystem Restoration*
9. *Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan – Volume I*
10. *Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan – Volume II*
11. *Long-Term Levee Protection Plan*
12. *Water Use Efficiency Component*
13. *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement / Environmental Impact Report*
14. *Water Quality Program*

Issuance of the Draft EIR/EIS represents a major milestone in the CALFED process. In it CALFED describes and evaluates three alternatives. Alternative 1 relies on existing conveyance; Alternative 2 relies on thru-Delta conveyance improvements; and Alternative 3 involves both thru-Delta conveyance improvements plus an isolated facility. CALFED is soliciting additional technical review and public input before making a decision on a preferred alternative. CALFED's *Phase II Interim Report* states that "Based on the evaluation to date, Alternative 3 appears to have the potential to provide greater performance on distinguishing characteristics" such as water quality, water supply, and operational flexibility. At the same time, however, the document states that Alternative 3 also "appears to present the most serious challenges in terms of assurances and implementability."

Status of Metropolitan's Review Effort:

Metropolitan will evaluate CALFED's environmental documentation independently and in conjunction with other stakeholders. Metropolitan is an active participant in the Ag/Urban water users caucus process, involving some of the State's largest agricultural and urban water users, dedicated to building as much agreement as possible on the key elements of the CALFED Program that affect participating stakeholders. Comments will be prepared and provided by the Ag/Urban participants.

Areas of particular interest to Metropolitan include: 1) performance of alternatives with respect to Southern California's water quality and water supply reliability needs; 2) scope and magnitude of CALFED's water use efficiency program; 3) scale and approach to ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation; 4) development of a package of assurances guaranteeing that all beneficiaries of the CALFED program will "get better together"; 5) detailed analyses of cost/benefit performance of CALFED elements; and 6) development of an equitable financing plan.

Initial Reactions from Other Interests/Parties:

Although initial reactions to CALFED's environmental documentation have been varied, the overall assessment of CALFED's rollout of the Draft PEIR/EIS is that it was successful because interested parties continue to stay engaged in the process. CALFED was generally praised for reaching this important milestone in the process. There were also concerns raised by members of

the environmental community. They have expressed concerns regarding the Program's reliance on new storage and conveyance facilities, and believe that CALFED is not aggressively pursuing water use efficiency measures including demand management actions and conservation programs. However, other stakeholders who have historically been opposed to improvements in Delta conveyance have stated that support for the alternatives may be realized if proper operational and environmental assurances can be agreed upon.

Most agricultural and urban water interests have reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the CALFED process, and are encouraging other parties to abandon historically contentious points of view in favor of new and constructive approaches. Ag/Urban participants expressed that CALFED has started down the right road toward developing a comprehensive solution to the Bay Delta. They believe that an adequate framework has been established through the Draft PEIR/EIS for CALFED to develop a mutually agreeable solution package which will include: 1) a consistent, high quality drinking water source for 22 million Californians; 2) an effective program to enhance Delta fisheries and other environmental resources; 3) a foundation for water supply reliability; and 4) water management measures including conservation and recycling as well as voluntary water transfer programs.

Governor Pete Wilson lauded the efforts of the CALFED Program agencies and staff, and their efforts to "develop a long-term 'fix' that suits California's economic and environmental needs." He also noted that there is much at stake for California, and stated "now that we have the answers before us, I suggest the time has come to speed up our efforts. For we still have plenty of work ahead if we are to meet a deadline by year's end."

CALFED's Timeline -- Work Products, Workshops, & Final PEIR/EIS:

CALFED has announced an ambitious 75-day public comment period. Comments to the DEIR/EIS will be due to CALFED by June 1, 1998. Additionally, CALFED has scheduled a series of 12 hearings throughout the State during this comment period. The full list of dates and locations is provided in the attached document, *Public Hearings Schedule*.

Next Steps:

Metropolitan staff will work closely with the member agencies and other stakeholders including the Ag/Urban caucus participants to jointly evaluate CALFED's environmental documentation. Your Board will be briefed on the nature of comments that will be provided to CALFED at the May Board Meeting. Staff will also provide its analysis of how Metropolitan's region will benefit from each of the alternatives.

GVT/SNA/CL

Attachment

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CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

Public Hearings Schedule

CALFED will hold 12 public hearings to gain input on the draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report. An orientation session will be held in Sacramento April 3.

