



ABAG/CALFED TASK FORCE E-M E M O

Date : September 20, 2004

To : ABAG/CALFED Task Force Members and Interested Parties

From: Kathleen Van Velsor, Project Manager

Re : Task Force Update/News and Information

Members and interested parties – The AGENDA for the September 29th Task Force meeting will be posted to you in short order. The following items of news and information may be useful to you and your colleagues in the interim:

- ✚ The **BAWSCA (Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency) Board of Directors meeting** will be held on **Thursday, September 23**, in the Foster City Community Building, 1000 E. Hillsdale, Foster City. <http://bawua.org/news.html>
- ✚ The **ABAG Pacific Security Expo, set for October 5-6 at the Oakland Marriott City Center Hotel**, will feature John Garamendi, State of California Insurance Commissioners, and Henry Renteria, Director, California Office of Emergency Services. For more information: www.abag.ca.gov/abag/events/events_display.html To register online: www.pacificsecurityexpo.com
- ✚ The **North Bay Watershed Association** maintains a web site of information at <http://www.nbwatershed.org/>
- ✚ **California Bay Delta Authority Public Involvement Calendar**
<http://calwater.ca.gov/calendar/calendar.shtml>

CalFed passes Senate; \$395 million for California water projects

Associated Press - 9/15/04

By Erica Werner, staff writer

WASHINGTON - The Senate passed the long-fought CalFed water bill Wednesday, authorizing \$395 million to restore California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and ensure a reliable water supply for millions of farmers and residents.

The sweeping, six-year bill would enact the first major changes to California's water systems since the 1960s. Differences with a version passed by the House in July must still be resolved before the legislation can go to the president for his signature.

The bill authorizes feasibility studies for several major new storage projects, among them enlarging Los Vaqueros reservoir in Contra Costa County and raising the Shasta Dam.

It authorizes \$90 million for ecosystem restoration programs and contains provisions to expedite approvals of 49 recycling projects. It requires a feasibility study for restoring the Salton Sea and includes an Environmental Water Account to ensure water for fisheries.

After a decade of dispute over the California Federal Bay-Delta Program among environmentalists, farmers, residential users and others, the passage was a victory some thought would never happen. The bill passed by unanimous consent with no debate.

"Passage of this legislation was a long time coming and it is the result of hard work to reach a bipartisan consensus involving a wide range of stakeholders," Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D.-Calif. and the bill's lead author, said in a statement.

House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, also cheered passage of the legislation.

"House and Senate passage of CalFed has been sought for nearly a decade by all of us who have a vested interest in meeting California's water needs for the 21st century," he said in a statement.

Aides to both Pombo and Feinstein said they were optimistic about getting a final bill passed that can be signed by the president before the end of the year. But a hurdle still remains.

The bill passed by the Senate on Wednesday leaves out so-called pre-authorization language that would allow the secretary of the Interior to approve four specific water storage projects without congressional signoff. Congress would be given 120 days to say no but would not be asked to say yes. Feinstein had insisted the bill could not pass the Senate with that language.

But some Republican House members view the language as key in guaranteeing that the storage projects, which they view as central to a good water bill, will happen.

The four projects in question are the Los Vaqueros enlargement, the Shasta Dam raise, surface storage on the Upper San Joaquin and Sites Reservoir in the Antelope Valley. Under the Senate version of the bill, feasibility studies are authorized for those projects.

"Somebody's got to give," said Pombo spokesman Brian Kennedy.

Lawmakers will be under pressure to reach a compromise and get a final bill to the president. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration has been involved, and Schwarzenegger wrote a letter supporting CalFed and has raised the issue in private talks with lawmakers, said his resources secretary, Mike Chrisman. If the legislation stalls, the administration may get more involved, Chrisman said.

"It's very, very important," Chrisman said. "At this stage of the game, given where we are with CalFed, the federal government stepping up with these kinds of dollars is very important to us completing our commitment to all of the parties."

Water agencies and business groups applauded the passage of the bill through the Senate, but environmentalists complained it puts creating new water storage ahead of ecosystem restoration. Nearly two dozen environmental organizations sent a letter to Feinstein and Sen. Barbara Boxer, D.-Calif., this week criticizing the bill. #

U.S. may plug funding gap for levees

Sacramento Bee - 9/18/04

By Stuart Leavenworth, staff writer

Congressional leaders are close to authorizing \$90 million to fix some

of the worst levees in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta - one of the few times the federal government has delved into a flooding problem that threatens farms, roads, railroads and the state's water supply.

The Senate included the funds in [a reauthorization bill for the Cal-Fed water program](#) on Wednesday. The House included that same levee work in its version of the \$395 million bill, meaning that Delta flood protection stands to receive a funding jolt if the two arms of Congress can reconcile other Cal-Fed issues.

Delta levees are widely considered to be the weakest link in the state's water system. Floods and normal tides have ruptured more than 35 levees since 1980, including one in June that flooded 12,000 acres of farmland near Stockton.

That levee failure, on the Jones Tract, caused saltwater to rush upstream and prompted state and federal officials to temporarily shut down nearby drinking water intakes. If an earthquake caused several Delta levees to rupture simultaneously, it could jeopardize the water supplies of 22 million Californians, say state officials.

Sergio Guillen, a water manager with the California Bay Delta Authority, said federal funding will allow the state to go beyond mere maintenance to actual upgrades of aging levees.

"It is almost impossible to describe how important this is," said Guillen, noting that Congress is helping Cal-Fed during an uncertain period for state funding.

About 1,100 miles of levees line the sinuous sloughs, river channels and islands of the Delta. Many of these islands are sinking, partly because farming has exposed their peat soils to air and oxidation.

At the same time, sea level is rising, causing more water to lap against levees that were never properly engineered.

Under its original plans, the Cal-Fed program had expected to spend \$269 million by now to improve Delta levees, but it has received less than \$84 million. About half of those funds have come from a state and local "subventions" program, which is slated to expire in 2006.

If Congress ends up approving the \$90 million, Cal-Fed plans to use it to upgrade 200 miles of vulnerable levees, including 80 miles on Bethel, Bradford, Holland, Hotchkiss, Jersey, Sherman, Twitchell and Webb islands.

Sitting in the western Delta, those islands hold back saltwater that would otherwise rush toward the state and federal water pumps. "If you lost those islands, you could significantly impact water reliability," said Paul Bowers, a project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

For years, financing for Delta levees has been controversial. Critics question why taxpayers should pay to fix levees that protect private farmland and are mostly privately owned and maintained.

An answer to that question came in June, said Tom Zuckerman, a Delta landowner and lawyer for the Central Delta Water Agency. When the Jones Tract flooded, it threatened a key rail link and a water pipeline for the East Bay Municipal Utility District. It shut down roads and nearly caused multiple levee breaches that could have brought the flood to Stockton's door.

In the past, said Zuckerman, Congress has approved funding for "project levees" - such as 1,600 miles of levees that are part of the Sacramento and San Joaquin flood control projects. Most levees in the Delta don't fall into that category.

"This is the first time we have had federal assistance for maintenance or improvements on nonproject levees," said Zuckerman.

It's a big step, he said, but not a final step.

For Cal-Fed to start work on the levee upgrades, the Senate and House would need to resolve differences in their two bills. President Bush would need to sign the legislation. And Congress would need to appropriate funds.

State and local agencies will also play a role. Under the Senate and House legislation, the federal government would agree to pay for one-third of all levee work, as long as one-third of the funds comes from state sources and another third from locals.

As Congress mulls a final version, contractors for the state Department of Water Resources continue to pump out water from Jones Tract. Contractors have so far drained about 8 feet of water from the 12,000-acre tract, about half the volume, said Don Strickland, a spokesman for DWR.

The state has spent \$22.5 million responding to the disaster, according to Jim Peddy, a DWR field engineer. Another \$18.5 million will be needed to help farmers get ready for planting next spring - a commitment made by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger when he toured the area in June. #



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