ABAG – CalFed Task Force

Strategic Planning Session
April 19, 2004
MetroCenter, Oakland, CA

Draft Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Greg Zlotnik, Co-Chair of the ABAG-CalFed Task Force, welcomed everyone, thanked everyone for participating and introduced the facilitator for the meeting, Greg Bourne (Center for Collaborative Policy), who also prepared this meeting summary. Bourne asked everyone to introduce him or herself and provided an overview of the agenda. He noted the following objectives for the meeting:

- Clarify the need for regional cooperation
- Clarify the mission/vision for the Task Force or its successor efforts
- Clarify the interests of the Bay-Delta Authority related to the Task Force
- Identify and discuss potential approaches to regional cooperation
- Identify and discuss potential funding strategies.

Key Issues

Bourne highlighted several key issues identified by various Task Force members prior to the meeting. These included:

- Regional unification – can the region speak with one voice? On what issues? Will the region benefit from regional cooperation in competition against other regions (particularly Southern California)?
- Role of ABAG – what roles are and should be filled by ABAG staff in support of the Task Force?
- Membership/participation – to what extent is membership on the Task Force important, and how can these issues be more effectively addressed?
- Integrated Regional Planning – several water districts are already working on developing Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMP). What is the appropriate role of the Task Force or its successor with this initiative?
- Bay-Delta Authority Support – does the Authority remain interested in supporting the Task Force as it is comprised, and with its current focus? If the focus were to change?
- Time sensitivity – numerous opportunities are or soon will be available to support water-related activities in the region. How can the Task Force or its successor better respond to these opportunities?

- Local government involvement – to what extent do local governments want to be more involved in water issues facing their communities? How might local governments and water districts work more closely?

Small Group Discussions

Meeting participants were assigned to tables at the beginning of the meeting to mix representatives of various interest groups. These tables served as the basis for small group discussions. The two questions posed to the small groups were:

1) What value has been provided by the Task Force to date?
2) What additional value might be added by the Task Force or a successor effort?

After a period of discussion, each small group reported their highlights to the whole group.

<u>Value Provided</u>

- Define key regional issues that should be addressed
- Find common ground where possible
- Create forum for discussion of water-related interests
- Create heightened awareness of value of regional cooperation and planning
- Developed letter expressing concern about CALFED governance
- Provide education on water and other issues of regional concern
- Identify the potential of desalination
- Discuss IRWMPs
- Subcommittees, in particular data collection
- Communicate consensus items to state and federal entities
- Provide impetus for increased collaboration among water agencies
- Create renewed interest in water resources and connection to land use planning
- Begin discussing the idea of sustainability
- Provide a venue for City and county representatives to talk about water

<u>Additional Value to be Provided</u>

- Begin thinking on a watershed level
- Provide a forum for cities, counties and water districts to discuss IRWMP's
- Take a leadership role in supporting and coordinating IRWMP efforts
- Achieve broad consensus to effect policy changes; first define what we mean by consensus
- Achieve results
- Overcome distrust among various interests
- Add political clout
- Fast track consensus building to keep up with Southern California
- Work to ensure "region" is not defined to put San Francisco Bay area at a disadvantage
- Push for geographic equity

- Lobby Bay Area legislators with all local government, water agencies, sanitation districts and flood control districts on same page
- Explore watershed-based approaches to integrating land use planning with water issues and natural resources
- Revisit mission/vision in successor to the Task Force to ensure that the Bay's interest still considered by the Bay-Delta Authority
- Focus on the parts of CALFED relevant to Bay Area (e.g. SDIP) to prevent harm to the Bay Area
- Achieve long-term stability/sustainability
- Achieve funding parity
- Address population and growth in the Bay Area
- Work on local government being asked to provide more mandated programs without funding
- Develop focused strategy on CALFED funding over long term – who is the "beneficiary?"
- What happens if CALFED funding goes away? What does not get done if the Task Force has no dedicated staff?
- Develop detailed needs assessment and understanding
- Recognize when interests do not overlap and deal positively with any divisiveness
- Achieve missed value originally expected from the Task Force – address the connections to land use and political clout
- Continue to build trust.

One group cited a vision of what Bay Area cooperation would look like, sharing the following common objectives: 1) protection of the Bay Delta and 2) enhancing water supply/quality reliability. Another highlighted the observation that cities and counties are still disconnected from each other and water districts, and that this needs to change.

Views on Regional Cooperation

Gene Leong, Greg Zlotnik and Cindy Darling followed by providing their views on the value of regional cooperation. Each highlighted the value of having local governments and water districts within the Bay Area working together on issues facing the region. Gene cited the need to be more competitive with other regions for funding and overall policy initiatives, and that regional cooperation is needed to achieve this. Greg Zlotnik suggested that the Task Force, or its successor, might be more successful if it broadened its focus to issues of sustainability facing the region. Cindy Darling noted that the Bay-Delta Authority is interested in seeing water districts, local governments and other major stakeholders working more closely together in developing Bay Area solutions to water and environmental challenges.

Integrated Regional Water Management Plans

During lunch (kindly provided by the Santa Clara Valley Water District), John Woodling, Chief of the Conjunctive Management Program for DWR, was to have provided an overview of recent public workshops on Chapter Eight of Proposition 50. John was not

able to attend due to illness, so Greg Bourne briefly presented the PowerPoint used for the public workshops (which he facilitated for DWR).

Plenary Discussion

The final agenda topic for the day was to discuss two remaining questions. Rather than working in small groups, the group decided to stay in a plenary session. The two questions to discuss were:

1) What are shared visions/objectives for regional cooperation?
2) What organizational structure or approach might best facilitate achieving shared objectives?

<u>Shared Objectives</u>

The following ideas related to the desired mission or vision of the Task Force or a successor effort:

- Actively Engage in Assuring Bay Area Benefits from CalFed Implementation. This will require attention to public involvement, transparency of the process and implementation of CalFed strategies.
- Revise the focus of the Task Force on sustainability. This suggests planning on a watershed scale, linking water supply, water quality, land use, biodiversity and ecosystem restoration.
- Work together on developing IWRMPs. This includes establishing a baseline for the region(s), identifying regional needs, acknowledging what is being done to address those needs, and identifying strategies for meeting those needs.
- Education and public awareness. The main thrust should be developing cohesive, coordinated approaches to helping educate elected officials and the broader public.
- Funding. Focus on developing more effective strategies for obtaining funding.
- Grow in influencing state and federal policy-making.

An extensive discussion followed related to whether this mission would provide sufficient incentive for participation. Some expressed value in the education and awareness functions of the Task Force. Others expressed the need for the Task Force to be more action oriented, and that this would be necessary to sustain their interest. The facilitator noted that these were not mutually exclusive objectives and could potentially both be met.

Nonetheless, several Task Force members noted that the group will need to be more action oriented to sustain their participation. Some participants cited one letter on which consensus had been developed as the only action taken thus far by the Task Force. In the wake of these comments, there was general concurrence with the idea that the Task Force needed to accomplish more.

Some suggested that the reason progress was slow to date was due to the “guarded” approach several organizations had taken to their participation. It was suggested that the various organizations involved on the Task Force will need to open-up and exhibit some trust in the group if it was going to accomplish anything meaningful. The facilitator

noted that perhaps some “confidence-building measures” could be agreed upon to build the trust necessary for the group to achieve greater productivity and cooperation.

The main outcome of the discussion was that the Task Force should focus on activities that will lead to accomplishments on the first three objectives: 1) to actively engage in assuring the Bay Area benefits from CalFed implementation; 2) to explore issues and strategies related to sustainability of water resources in the Bay Area; and 3) to work cooperatively on developing IRWMPs for the region which reflect the greater needs facing the Bay Area. The later would acknowledge that the Bay Area may be comprised of several “sub-regions” as the best strategy for funding and meeting the needs of specific areas.

Organizational Structure and Direction

Three overarching issues characterized this discussion of the structure and direction of the Task Force. The first issue is whether the Task Force should continue “as is” or be re-constituted or re-focused. The re-constitution of the Task Force would address issues of membership and participation. Most expressed an interest in having all the major interest groups integrally involved, while acknowledging trust among some groups is still lacking. This leads to the conclusion by some that membership should be limited in some way, and by others that this is the very reason all the interest groups need to be engaged. Issues around re-focusing the Task Force involve the clarification of mission as discussed previously.

The second issue is related to membership and voting. But as an advisory body with no authority at this point, are membership and voting issues important? It was suggested these are not critical issues so long as the Task Force has no authority to compel its members to action. If it is a volunteer effort to explore cooperative approaches to advancing Bay Area interests, all major stakeholders should participate to ensure their interests are addressed in the discussions and eventual actions.

If the group were to have some authority in the future, such as might occur if the member organizations formed a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), then membership and voting would have significance. Under this scenario, the JPA would likely be formed of local governments and water districts. Then other mechanisms for broader stakeholder input would need to be employed.

The issue of voting versus consensus also needs to be addressed as the mechanism for decision-making. Again, this could change if the nature of the organization changes. But most noted the value of having the Task Force or its successor effort work towards consensus to the extent possible.

The third major set of issues raised is the role of ABAG as convener of the Task Force. Some expressed their concern that ABAG has a set of interests like every other organization involved on the Task Force and, as such, should not act as convener. Others did not perceive this a problem given ABAG’s role as a convener of local government

agencies. It was also noted that ABAG is an association of governments with little authority, and commonly convenes a variety of organizations. It was noted, however, that concerns about ABAG serving both as participant and convener has raised questions related to future CalFed funding.

Two alternatives to ABAG acting as convener were noted. One is to establish a Steering Committee of Task Force members to jointly set agendas for the meetings. Another is to select an impartial third party to help convene and facilitate the Task Force. Even if not acting as convener, ABAG could still serve the invaluable role of "staffing" the Task Force, using its resources for data collection and analysis in support of the activities of the Task Force. This remained an issue to be resolved at a subsequent meeting.

Next Steps

The Task Force decided that a follow-up meeting would be helpful to confirm tentative agreements on primary objectives and identify changes in the structure of the Task Force or successor effort that would help achieve those objectives. Representatives of ABAG and CalFed indicated they would work with the Co-Chairs to determine the appropriate next steps and would be back in touch with everyone in the near future. The meeting was then adjourned.