

Statement of Kirk Rodgers
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Subcommittee on Water and Power

Hearing on Water Supply Vulnerabilities in the Sacramento/San Joaquin River System
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Introduction

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee, I am Kirk Rodgers, Mid-Pacific Regional Director for the Bureau of Reclamation. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the current water related infrastructure conditions in California's Central Valley and the challenges we face in protecting future water supply deliveries. My remarks are focused on the work and activities in the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta and on the risk faced in the context of levee failures.

While our attention is understandably drawn to the levees, it is important to keep in mind that the long term reliability and security of water supplies can be heavily impacted by other problem areas being addressed by the CALFED Program. Future water supply projects, ecosystem projects, water management strategies, regulatory decisions, and planning processes currently being developed or implemented by Reclamation and the CALFED Program will determine the future reliability and certainty of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project's water management infrastructure as a whole.

CALFED is a collaborative effort among 25 state and federal agencies to improve water supplies in California and the health of the Bay-Delta Watershed. In August 2000, the CALFED agencies signed a Record of Decision (ROD) that described a 30-year plan for implementing actions to resolve conflict in the Delta related to water supply, water quality, ecosystem quality, and levee stability. Public Law 108-361, signed in October 2004, authorized the federal CALFED agencies to implement the CALFED Program using the ROD as a general framework.

Importance of Bay-Delta

The Delta is probably the most important feature of California's complicated water supply delivery system. Water pumped out of the Delta provides drinking water for two-thirds of the state, and supports the most productive agricultural region in the nation. The Delta's channels assist in transporting water from upstream reservoirs to the south Delta, where the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP) facilities can pump water into the California Aqueduct and CVP's Delta-Mendota Canal. The stability of the Delta levees that contain the water in these channels is paramount to protecting the Delta infrastructure along with ensuring a reliable supply of water to the Federal and State facilities. The Delta includes nearly 60 islands and tracts lying below sea level that are kept dry by levees whose construction does not meet modern standards, and which in some instances were built to protect crops from flooding. These levees were not built to provide as much protection from loss of life or property damage as they would be if built in accordance with today's construction standards and project purposes. We will defer to the Corps of Engineers and the State of California to more fully address the condition of the levees in the Sacramento/San Joaquin River system.

Delta Levees and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Levee stability in the Delta is one of the four primary objectives of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The Preferred Program Alternative described in the ROD assumed that a through-Delta approach would continue to be the method of conveyance to south Delta project facilities for the first seven years of Program implementation (Stage 1). The CALFED Agencies did not rule out the possibility in the future of constructing an isolated conveyance facility that would provide superior assurances of a reliable water supply south of the Delta, but because of timing of implementation it was not included in the Stage 1 decision. Instead, the ROD focused on modifications within the current conveyance system in the Delta and a series of studies to determine if improved water supply and reliability, protection and improvement of Delta water quality, improvements in ecosystem health, and reduced risk of supply disruption due to catastrophic breaching of Delta levees could in fact be achieved with the current "thru Delta" means of conveyance. Other ways to convey water through the Delta include "dual conveyance," which refers to the conveyance of water through the Delta as well as around the Delta via a pipeline or canal, or "isolated conveyance," referring to the conveyance of a majority of the water around the Delta via a pipeline or canal. A determination on the adequacy of the existing configuration and the possible need to examine "dual conveyance" or "isolated conveyance" facilities is to be made in the next two years.

Currently, CALFED agencies are focusing on the overall risk of Delta levee failures and developing both short-term and long-term strategies for levee improvements. A current high priority activity is the Delta Risk Management Strategy (DRMS), which is being led by the Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Water Resources. Reclamation's role in DRMS has been limited to agency coordination and tracking of accomplishments and the integration of this activity into the broader CALFED program. The DRMS has the objective of evaluating ongoing and future risk of levee failure; identifying the probable consequences; and identifying levee maintenance and upgrades that are necessary and economically justified to reduce controllable risk. Data gained from this critically important study will help establish the priorities for near-term and long-term actions that will reduce the risk associated with catastrophic levee failure in the Delta.

The goals for levee system integrity and improvement contained in the ROD were well founded when developed; however, the DRMS will reevaluate those goals to determine if they remain valid. The DRMS study is estimated to cost \$6 million and is scheduled to be completed in 2007. In the interim while the DRMS study is being completed, the program will continue to implement levee maintenance, levee improvement, and other components of this ROD.

Reclamation's On-going Water Supply Improvement Activities

In addition to efforts to protect the Delta infrastructure, expanding water storage capacity is among several integral components of the CALFED program. Additional storage is one way of meeting the needs of a growing population and, if strategically located, could provide additional flexibility in the system to improve water quality and support fish restoration efforts. One element of a reliable water supply is the ability to capture water during peak flows and during wet years, as well as more efficient water use through conservation and water reuse and recycling, advanced water treatment such as desalination, and non-traditional storage methods such as conjunctive use with groundwater; the flood control benefits of storage capacity are an inherent part of this. Reclamation, in partnership with the California Department of Water Resources, is investigating the feasibility of expanded surface storage capacity at existing reservoirs and strategically located off-stream sites identified in the ROD. Four surface storage feasibility studies are currently in progress, all of which are to be completed between 2008 and 2009. Storage projects are not being developed in isolation but rather as part of an overall water management strategy. As such, storage combined with other program actions such as conservation, transfers and habitat restoration could contribute to and be compatible with the water supply reliability, water quality and ecosystem restoration program objectives.

Conclusion

Protection of the Bay-Delta is of critical importance to California. Much more needs to be accomplished to ensure the long-term sustainability and reliability of California's water supply. Major decisions will need to be made in the near future regarding the protection of the Delta's critical infrastructure and the many integrated elements of the CALFED program, including the potential construction of new surface storage facilities, that will shape California's water management system into the future. We believe that these challenges will be best addressed through the CALFED Program. That concludes my testimony. Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to the sub-committee and others for continuing to work with the Administration to address these significant water issues facing California. I would be happy to answer any questions.