

Testimony of Patrick Wright
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to the

Subcommittee on Water and Power

House Committee on Resources

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Thank you for inviting me to testify on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and water project operations in California. I have attached to my testimony a summary of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's approach to meeting the state's long-term water needs, and will defer to the testimony of my state and federal colleagues to provide you with more detail on water project operations this year.

In summary, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program has launched the largest and most comprehensive water management plan in the nation. The *Framework for California's Water Future* is a balanced and integrated approach to reduce conflicts over our limited supplies and to address the state's long-term water needs.

It calls for the most aggressive water conservation program in the nation, together with specific timetables for developing over six million acre feet of new water storage projects - the biggest investment in the state's water infrastructure in 40 years.

The key to its success will be maintaining and strengthening the leadership of the agencies and stakeholders; securing federal, state, and local funds; and meeting the ambitious deadlines and commitments in the plan.

Our greatest challenge in putting the plan together came in developing short-term strategies to increase the reliability of supplies while the long-term infrastructure investments are being made. In each of the years preceding adoption of the CALFED plan, we had major crises over water project operations that undermined public confidence in the Program.

The CALFED Program addressed this challenge in several ways:

- By investing in short-term improvements in water supply reliability and water quality. Last year, we allocated over \$300 million to water districts throughout the state.
- By developing a drought contingency plan, and facilitating the transfer of over 300,000 acre feet.
- By developing an innovative Environmental Water Account to set aside water for fish without reducing allocations to other users. Last year, for the first time ever, south-of-Delta contractors received commitments that their supplies would not be reduced during the spring and summer because of additional regulatory restrictions.
- And by hiring a lead scientist and launching a science program to provide independent reviews of all aspects of the program. This past year, the science program conducted independent reviews of the science surrounding both our listed species - Delta smelt and salmon, and a candidate species - Sacramento splittail, and conducted a thorough, 3-day review of the science underlying use of the Environmental Water Account for listed species. These and several other workshops, including a

series of studies on the operations of the Delta Cross Channel, are leading to fundamental changes in our thinking about how the Delta functions. We are now planning a 2-day workshop in April to consider the recommendations from these independent evaluations, and to further review the science surrounding water project operations and the Delta.

We have not been successful, however, in meeting our goal of increasing supplies to south-of-Delta CVP contractors. The CALFED Plan anticipated that a series of operational measures and cooperative water management actions would increase allocations by 15% to these contractors, which would increase their allocations to 65-70% of contract totals.

We understand that this target is going to be difficult to reach. In fact, during the last several weeks and months, virtually every interest group has expressed concern about one or more of the measures under consideration to meet this target - from the Santa Clara Valley Water District, which is concerned about the potential risk to the quality and reliability of its supplies; to the farmers in the South Delta, who are concerned about the potential impacts to water levels in the Delta from increased pumping; to environmental groups, who are concerned about the potential risk to Delta fisheries. Each of these groups supports the goal, but no one wants their supplies to be at risk.

It is clear, therefore, that we are going to need the leadership of the agencies to sort through the alternatives under consideration and develop an operations plan that puts us back on track towards meeting the commitments in the plan, while minimizing impacts to other users. That's why I strongly endorse Assistant Secretary Raley's call for the agencies to develop a new plan as soon as possible. To put it simply, the credibility of the Program depends on it.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony.

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