



# CLEAN WATER ACTION

February 6, 2006

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Mr. Paul Marshall  
SDIP EIS/EIR Comments  
State of California Department of Resources, Bay Delta Office  
1416 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, California, 95814  
Faxed to: (916) 653-6077  
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**Re: Comments on South Delta Improvements Program Environmental Impact Statement/Environment Impact Report EIS/R**

Dear Mr. Marshall:

Clean Water Action is a national organization that advocates for clean, safe and affordable drinking water. In California, Clean Water Action holds a seat on the Drinking Water Subcommittee of the CALFED Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee. Our organization's principle concern in this document is its analysis of drinking water quality. As written, this document fails to adequately assess the impact on drinking water supplies, quality and reliability for all Delta drinking water users. We request that the EIR/EIS be amended to supply this information.

### Project Objectives

Page ES-1 of this document states "This Draft EIS/EIR is designed to be fully consistent with CALFED's overall goals of water supply reliability, water quality, ecosystem restoration, and levee system integrity." Viewed from a water quality standpoint, this does not appear to be a true statement. The very limited objectives of this project fail to address CALFED's overall goals, particularly the CALFED general target of "continuously improving Delta water quality for all uses" and the specific target of "providing safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water in a cost-effective way". This project addresses only agricultural water quality, only in the south Delta, and, in fact, results in reduced drinking water quality for virtually every constituent at most intakes. As described, this project is not consistent with the water quality goals of the CALFED Record of Decision (ROD).

### Water Quality Impacts

The CALFED ROD sets targets at drinking water intakes in the Delta for bromide, chloride, total organic carbon, nitrate, total dissolved solids, and turbidity. This document fails to assess the impact of this project on these specific numeric targets. For instance, this analysis measures electrical conductivity rather than individual chloride or bromide concentrations. Since these constituents are regulated separately as drinking water contaminants and disinfectant by-product precursors, they must to be evaluated separately. Additionally, a determination is made that a 5% decrease in each of the selected water quality indicators is an insignificant

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impact. If these targets are not currently being met, *any* increase in their concentration at drinking water intakes must be considered a cumulative impact. A more appropriate analysis should measure the ability to achieve these targets at any drinking water intakes, both with and without this project.

The determination that larger variances in water quality are not significant because they are limited in duration is not appropriate – or at least has not been adequately justified. Additional analysis should be performed to determine the impact on water supply, quality and reliability of those increased levels. What impact will these variances have on the ability of the intakes to operate on their current schedule? Since improved water supply reliability is an objective of this project, a reduction in the ability of any of these intakes to pump water from the Delta must be considered a significant impact.

The DSM2 models uses data through 2001. That means it has limited data covering the current levels of Delta exports, which have increased since 2000. What level of pumping is assumed in the No Project Alternative? We suggest either a No Project or an Environmentally Superior Alternative that looks at pre-2000 pumping levels, and another alternative that models the current pumping regime.

The assumption that a decrease in water quality at the intakes can be offset through treatment is not substantiated in this document. The Phase 2 Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rule, which was mandated by Congress in the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act was published on January 4, 2006. While the numerical standards for disinfectant by-products and bromide are unchanged, U.S. EPA has mandated more stringent monitoring and more limited averaging for their presence in drinking water distribution system. This rule was published in draft form in 2003, so this information was available in the preparation of this document. The assumption that every water system using Delta supply can absorb increases in salinity, dissolved solids and organic carbon and still comply with this rule must be substantiated.

The Equivalent Level of Public Health Protection (ELPH) stated in the CALFED ROD looks at ways to achieve the CALFED water quality targets through other means than water quality improvements in the delta. It does *not* assume that reductions in water quality can be offset by additional treatment in the distribution system. In fact, the few ELPH plans completed to date rely on maintaining the current quality of Delta source water to maintain water quality standards.

The document does not assume any water quality changes due to climate change, even though salinity is a major focus of the water quality discussion. While much is unknown about climate change, even conservative projections show a sea level rise, which will at minimum increase bromide levels at drinking water intakes. This is a foreseeable development that, under CEQA and NEPA, must be evaluated.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this document.

Sincerely,

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