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Agenda Item: Item 6
Meeting Date: November 16, 2006

Environmental Water Account (EWA) Review Panel

Summary: In collaboration with EWA Implementing agencies and involved stakeholders, the CALFED Science Program is organizing an independent review of the EWA Program. This is the fifth review organized since the program's inception in 2000. Staff will provide an overview of the upcoming event.

Action: This is an informational item only.

Background: The Environmental Water Account (EWA) Program is a key component of CALFED Program's Water Management Strategy, and was created in 2000 to address two problems - declining fish populations and unreliable water supplies. Its purpose is to better protect fish by making it possible to modify water project operations in the Bay-Delta and still meet the needs of water users. The EWA Program is also part of the CALFED policy of adaptive management, and ongoing discussions and periodic scientific review are a critical part of the process to help guide management decisions.

To meet these goals, the CALFED Science Program has been tasked with providing annual scientific review to assess how much water was acquired, how it was used, and whether it had an impact. The past four reviews focused primarily on reviewing program implementation—how was acquired water used for target species—however, as the program moves into its last year of funding and implementation, the 2006 Review will attempt to address the key questions of biological impact. The specific focus will be on the contribution of the EWA and other environmental water programs to protecting and restoring delta smelt, Chinook salmon, and steelhead in the San Francisco estuary and watershed, developing plans for science needs and water allocation priorities for EWA Year 7, and identifying science components and water allocation strategies for a possible future environmental water program.

In collaboration with implementing agency and stakeholder scientists, and with input from the past Lead Scientist, the Science Program has developed the scope and charge into a comprehensive review agenda. See Attachment 1 for review scope, Review Panel charge, and panel membership; and Attachment 2 (to be provided at the ISB meeting) for Review Agenda.

The review will be held in the CALFED Bay Delta Program offices in Sacramento, November 28-30, 2006. For more information on EWA and the upcoming review, see the EWA Workshops webpage:

<http://science.calwater.ca.gov/workshop/ewa.shtml>.

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Science Program staff will provide the ISB an overview of the upcoming EWA review in preparation for the ISB's future role in evaluating and commenting on the EWA Panel review and agency response.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – 2006 EWA Review—scope, panel charge, and membership
Attachment 2 – 2006 EWA Review Agenda (to be handed out at meeting)

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