

Attachment F3

Kim, and Bruce,

I attended the public meeting of the Independent Science Board yesterday with considerable interest. I hope the California Bay-Delta Authority and the Board are accepting written as well as oral comment. Accordingly, will you please forward this letter to the members of the Board for me.*

To the Board:

My suggestions may be less politic than the careful words presented before you yesterday, but are only in the spirit of being perfectly frank. As some of you already know, you have calmly and confidently stepped into a huge and risky maze, and I wish you the best in steering an exemplary course through it.

1. Approach any person or entity's statements or writings about CalFed issues with scientific skepticism. Seek multiple sources of information and opinion. Consider the source.** There are enormous stakes in almost anything that happens with California water, and everyone has a history and an agenda, be it economic, political, or philosophical. (Consider that your own agenda might err on the side of seeking more research.) There are powerful forces and undercurrents acting, not always honestly, that will try to sway or influence you, or -- equally likely and more subtly -- to distract your attention from important or controversial topics, or de-emphasize such topics so that you never shine a light on them (e.g., water conservation, especially in agriculture, and scientific economics of various CalFed alternatives may be two of these). Set your own agenda. Even "friendly" agencies, and CalFed itself, will have an un-objective "spin" in many instances. If a topic begins to heat up you may expect that you are close to a rich vein.
2. The big spin you may be unaware of is that CalFed was crafted as a sugar-coating to get the public to swallow the pill of additional dams. Granted, it evolved to be more sophisticated than that . . . and California probably will not be able to dodge the need to come up with some "new" water . . . and that should be done as effectively and sensitively as possible. Still, be conscious of maneuverings to use you to put a scientific face on the next big project.
3. Come with humility and caution. You are brilliant, experienced, eminent scientists, accustomed to being able to attack a problem and achieve a facility in dealing with it in short order. I have the greatest respect for that, but believe that in California water you have met a formidable opponent. The more I have worked on it, the more impressed I am with how much more there is to know, and with the dangers of just a little knowledge. Everyone I know who works on California water -- plenty of smart, savvy people -- echoes this theme.
4. Clear and frank communication of your conclusions is key. Media and parties with agendas will selectively present what you say, so simplicity, brevity, and unambiguous emphasis and re-emphasis of your points will be useful. You will want to avoid unintended consequences of what you say, so vetting wording with potentially affected agencies is fair. (For example, the National Research Council caused (probably unintended) legal and political damage to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) last year by stating that the measures of the Klamath biological opinion were unsupported scientifically. They equally could have said the measures were not unsupported scientifically; the data simply were not available. They also could have noted that FWS is legally required to act even if data are skimpy, but these subtleties were lost.) However, don't pull back from making controversial or unpopular statements -- having considered the complex consequences fully -- just because it makes some party uncomfortable. And resist softening wording in ways that make it less clear, less trenchant, or less true, just to satisfy a nervous agency.

5. Burning issues. I would include, as a start:
- adequate water quantities and timing for the aquatic ecosystem, esp. into the future
 - water conservation, including much more by ag
 - incentives for conservation, including tiered water pricing
 - riparian and marsh habitat, including levee setbacks
 - water pollution, notably synthetic organics, selenium, mercury, nutrients, and petroleum derivatives
 - invasive species, including provisions to find and attack new populations while small (e.g., *Nerodia*)
 - screening the federal and state water project export facilities (pumps)
 - hatchery and commercial and sport fishing impacts on wild fish populations

Best of luck in negotiating the maze, and thank you for considering my input. I would be happy to try to help with any questions you might have of me, now or at any time.

Sincerely,

David H. Wright, Ph.D.
1573 49th Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
916 739 8906
425 696 3265 fax

* Hard copy to follow.

** In fairness, that also would apply to me. I am currently an independent consultant in conservation biology, particularly involving ESA matters. My clients include environmental non-profit groups with interests in the Bay-Delta and California water-related issues. Formerly I worked with the Sacramento U.S. Fish and Wildlife office for more than 7 years, culminating as ESA consultation coordinator for that office, where I worked both directly and indirectly on water issues. I have a Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Arizona (1984), where I worked with James H. Brown. I worked for over 9 years in academic ecological research and teaching, and have published roughly 20 papers in ecology, mostly in peer-reviewed professional journals.