

May 8, 2008

Dr. Jeffery Mount
Chair, Independent Science Board
CALFED Bay Delta Program
650 Capitol Mall, 5th floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Dr. Mount:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requests a review by the CALFED Independent Science Board of the enclosed document: "San Joaquin Watershed Indicators Draft Final Report." Given our commitment to developing meaningful water quality performance measures, EPA initiated this effort to test a framework for water quality indicators in the San Joaquin River basin. The work was done by two organizations with substantial monitoring and assessment experience - the San Francisco Estuary Institute and The Bay Institute - in consultation with a number of agencies and stakeholders. EPA's purpose in sponsoring this project was to improve indicators methodology and help document program results.

Since the ISB has been an aggressive champion of the importance of performance measures to the CALFED Program, we anticipate this report will be of interest to you. This report focuses on salinity and selenium. One of the case studies in the report, selenium load reduction in the Grasslands sub-watershed, has received substantial funding through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. We have requested ISB review because we believe that some of the issues and findings, which reflect comments from the project Steering Committee and external reviewers, could be instructive for the CALFED effort on performance measures. Appendix D of the report includes external reviews indicating varying perspectives on uses of the indicators and expressing divergent evaluations of the indicator framework. Further guidance by the ISB on the major issues would be helpful.

We drafted review questions for your consideration (enclosed). We have sought to frame questions relevant to the CALFED performance measures, e.g., ways of relating project-level activities/results to larger scale outcomes. Because our ability to report on performance measures depends on appropriate data, the Board may want to consider how we can better link performance measures to monitoring design. Also attached is a preface to the report that summarizes the framework and comments received from reviewers.

On several occasions, the ISB has urged CALFED implementing agencies to increase the priority of performance measure development. On January 22, 2008, you wrote to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson and other State and federal agency managers expressing the ISB's concerns for the inadequate resources from the agencies for performance measures work. As an active participant in CALFED's water quality performance measures workgroup (which helped produce the Phase I report presented to the ISB last year), EPA agrees with the importance of performance measures. In addition to funding the enclosed report, we have also contracted with SFEI to draft a strategy for building a public-private partnership to improve water quality monitoring and assessment in the San Joaquin Valley. (Fact sheet enclosed.) This activity was initiated three years ago under the umbrella of "CMARP III" / "IEP+" led by DFG (with Randy Brown) and the IEP coordinators. We are now coordinating with similar efforts in the Sacramento Valley (through the Sacramento River Watershed Program) and in the Delta (just beginning under the leadership of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board). In light of the ISB's interest in the future of IEP (expressed in your April 4, 2008 memo to the IEP Coordinators), we intend to offer the ISB a briefing on our draft strategy later this year.

Our ultimate goal is an effective and efficient system of water quality monitoring and assessment in the Bay Delta watershed to allow agencies and stakeholders to make good decisions about protecting water quality for all beneficial uses.

Thank you in advance for considering this request. If a conversation would be useful in framing a review, please contact me at 415/972-3472 or schwinn.karen@epa.gov, or Carolyn Yale at 415/972-3482 (yale.carolyn@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

Karen Schwinn
Associate Director
Water Division, USEPA Region 9

Enclosures:

1. San Joaquin Watershed Indicators Draft Final Report, SFEI and TBI, April 2008. (Version transmitted to CALFED Science Program on 4/09/2008)
2. Proposed review questions
3. Draft Preface to Final Report
4. Fact Sheet: San Joaquin River Basin Monitoring Partnership Project Update – April 6, 2008

Cc:

Joe Grindstaff, CALFED

Elizabeth Soderstrom, CALFED

Sam Harader, CALFED

Sam Luoma, UC Davis

CALFED Water Quality Implementing Agencies

IEP Coordinators