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CALFED Bay-Delta Program
650 Capitol Mall, 5th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 445-5511
Fax: (916) 445-7297
www.science.calwater.ca.gov

November 25, 2008

Secretary Michael Chrisman, Chair
Delta Vision Committee

Dear Secretary Chrisman:

Earlier this month, the CALFED Independent Science Board (ISB) reviewed the Strategic Plan of the Governor's Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force. The goal of this review was to evaluate the Task Force's plans for organizing, coordinating and funding science to guide future management of the Delta. This review was preceded by a workshop last July that developed a suite of recommendations to the Task Force regarding science (attached). The ISB supports the Task Force's broad goals and objectives for science-based adaptive management of the Delta. The ISB, however, differs with some of the specific details of the Task Force's recommendations. These fall into two general categories.

Delta Science and Engineering Board. The Task Force recommends a large Science and Engineering Board—with broad representation—that is tasked with developing and reviewing the science program to support adaptive management. Based on experience over the past six years, the ISB recommends an alternative approach. A new Delta Science and Engineering Board should be established that replaces the current Independent Science Board. The Board will provide oversight of all science activity and programs that support adaptive management of the Delta. The new Board will be made up of 8-12 nationally or internationally prominent experts from various disciplines who are not directly affiliated with the programs or agencies it serves. The Board should meet annually to review programs and publicly report its results and recommendations. The ISB feels that this is a more effective and efficient use of an oversight board and avoids conflicts.

Delta Science and Engineering Program. The Task Force recommends a Delta Science and Engineering Program, but offers limited guidance for its scope and funding. The ISB suggests that the current CALFED Science Program be replaced by the Delta Science and Engineering Program. This program is to be guided by a nationally-prominent Lead Scientist, supported by a Program Director. To be successful, the Program should be well-staffed with stable, long-term funding and sufficient authority to integrate monitoring and research programs, track and inform adaptive management, seed new science activities, communicate science to policymakers, provide scientific review and synthesis, and support independent peer-review.

Secretary Michael Chrisman, Chair
Delta Vision Committee

To successfully navigate the challenges of adaptively managing the Delta in the future, California and the federal government must commit to a robust, well-coordinated science program with transparent oversight and review. The ISB encourages the Committee to support the development of a new and more effective approach to Delta science by adopting these recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Mount', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeff Mount, Chair
Independent Science Board

cc: John Kirlin
Joe Grindstaff
Cliff Dahm