

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

WATER EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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BAY DELTA CONSERVATION PLAN MEETINGS

PUBLIC COMMENTS ONLY

FOR:

BAKERSFIELD

Bakersfield:

Chair: I have a number of speaker cards here. If you didn't fill out a speaker card and you'd like to make a comment, you can grab one from the folks in the back and they'll bring it up to me. Otherwise, I'm just got a few here and we'll go ahead and get started. So the first one I have here is Jim Beck. I have a little timer here, too, for you to watch.

Mr. Beck: (indiscernible)

Chair: That's right. I'll even let you say your name first, too.

Mr. Beck: Thank you for visiting Bakersfield. This is the tenth stop on your world tour, and it's definitely going to be the most important place you visit. I'm Jim Beck. I'm the General Manager of the Kern County Water Agency, and Brent (indiscernible) been on the representatives from our agency that's been participating as part of the (indiscernible). And I just want to take the opportunity to express how important completion of the BDCP is to Kern County, and especially our agency. We're the second largest agricultural contractor on the State Water Project. We're the third largest urban contractor. And so the livelihood, the way of life of Kern County really relies on the Delta. And so the mission that you all have been

charged with is very important to us, and really the fate of our county is in some ways in your hands. So you have a very weighty responsibility and it's very important to us that the take permits that are part of the outcome of this be received. I think you're familiar with some of the significant impacts that we've received this year as a result of the lack of those permits and the decision under Judge Wanger, which is costing us at least 400,000 acre feet of water. That's a huge hit for Kern County, and it indicates the necessity for a long-term solution to the Delta issues. We believe that construction of an isolated facility, the operation of dual conveyance, is the most reasonable approach, and we expect that the BDCP process will lead to that conclusion. I think the important challenge for you, and for us as water users, is to make sure that process doesn't get derailed. We can't afford to wait. Next year's going to be a really tough year in our neck of the woods. You ought to visit us next year at this time, if we face some even more critical situations. And I think that that's a message, too, that as you complete the BDCP, remember the co-equal role of protecting species and protecting water supplies. Again, in this portion of the state, it seems that often the importance of protecting species at any cost seems to be the way business is

trying to get done in California. And often we see water users, and especially agricultural water users, unfairly targeted as the solution to all the species problems in the Delta. Again, we would hope that you continue to take up the message that we've bringing to Sacramento. And as part of this process you've got to take a fair look at all the stressors that are affecting the health of the Delta, that's invasive species, that's toxics, that's other pumpers besides the federal and state export facilities. And again, we think that that's an important part, that you maintain a scientific objectivity that looks at all of the stressors that have been identified. Again, I want to say thank you for coming and for giving us a chance to express some of Kern's concerns, and also some of the support that we have for the BDCP process. And finally, good luck.

Chair: Thank you. Robert Cundie?

Mr. Cundie: My name is Robert Cundie. I'm the Assistant Engineer Manager for Wheeler Ridge Maricopa Water Storage District. The district is a public agency formed in 1959, and we provide irrigation water service directly to 140 square miles of farmland at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, and an additional 30 square miles of lands in our district that rely on ground water also benefit from the project.

That project relies essentially on State Water Project supplies. Our agency takes water from the Kern County Water Agency. We comprise about 20% of their contracts, which makes us about 5% of the State Water Project. We also participate in ranges of 15-25% in various local groundwater banking projects, for which the State Water Project deliveries are essential components. Our farmers over the past 20 years have taken a number of activities consistent with state and environmental organization priorities. These has been to switch from low value crops to high value crops, to install high water use efficiency on farm irrigation systems, and to invest in groundwater banking facilities. All of these activities have the affect in some sense of making us more reliant on the State Water Project supplies and their delivery. And as we all know, those have been impacted. I will provide specific comments on some of the scoping that you are charged with doing as part of this process. My assumption is that there will be no project alternative. In some sense there will be a reduced or multiple reduced export alternatives, as well as what I understand is the preferred alternative for a dual system. Obviously, fisheries in the Delta are in a serious state, and you are urged to consider, not just the pumps themselves, but of

course, many, if not all, of the other stressors that impact those fishery species. Because a plan which primarily involves focus on the pumps can't possibly be the whole solution, because of the influence of invasive species, toxics, and waste water discharges, unscreened diversions, over 2,000 in the Delta, not just the screened diversions that occur at the state pumps. So all of these have to be factored in some fashion into the plan and in the analysis, so that the proper mitigation measures, and appropriate to the level of impact, are properly analyzed. In Kern County, there will be impacts from the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. They may be positive or negative. These impacts will include environmental impacts. For instance, in the no-project or reduced export alternatives, we would expect exports to be reduced into Kern County, and that reduction has direct affects on farmland, resulting in less farmland being in production and less food being produced. A loss of farmland under CEQA is a significant environmental affect that would need to be analyzed as part of your alternatives. In addition, the impacts on groundwater banking projects, of which Kern County has a major role in the state in supplying groundwater banking facilities, those impacts are necessary for analysis in reduced exports or no-project alternatives.

In the preferred alternatives, it's possible that these impacts may, in fact, be positive, if not only water supply reliability, but water supply itself, are improved as a result. And those positive impacts should also be recognized. We would like to make many more comments, but that focuses on the scoping elements that you've asked for input on tonight. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Next up is George Capello.

Mr. Capello: Hello, and thank you for allowing us to speak to you. I am George Capello. I am the President of the Wheeler Ridge Maricopa Water Storage District. My straight man there has given you all the statistic, so I won't bother going back over that. I wrote something out, but as I listened to you speak in the preliminary, I thought, you know, I better just talk off the top of my head and give you a flavor of what growers in the district are going through. I was a grower in the district. [beeping sound] Already? These impacts are real to the farmers, as you well know. And they understand dealing with the Delta, and the environmental situation, and making sure the environmental side is equally balanced with the agricultural need. And we have contracts for water that comes through the Delta. And with our reliability shrinking, and Judge Wanger type rules, and

these kinds of things, it's crushing the small farmer, and it's putting a heavy burden on the larger farmers. I've transitioned from a farmer into a real estate and appraisal business, and I see it impacting these guys continually. And it won't be long when the larger farmer cannot afford the cutbacks, the costs, and some of these burdens that are put on them, not to mention the other input costs that are going through the ceiling. Yes, prices have risen somewhat, but ag prices have stayed stable for over 35 years, while costs have gone up. So it's imperative that in your analysis that you please give some heavy weight to these impacts to agriculture, the need for a reliable water supply, and hopefully some stability in that region, along with the environmental issues that have to be covered. Those are important also. The Delta doesn't work without the species and all the things that go with it. But at the same time, you have to have agriculture that helps pay the bills. And I want to thank you, and hope you're not too exhausted after all these trips. But thank you for your consideration.

Chair: Thank you. And the last card I have is Ernest Connant.

Mr. Connant: Just a couple of brief comments. My name is Ernest Connant. I'm with the Young, Woolridge Law Firm, and we represent a number of

different districts in the San Joaquin Valley, principally in Kern County. And just to kind of put this in further perspective, and to kind of elaborate on a little bit of what Jim said, all of the imported supplies to Kern County are dependent on the Delta. Of course, the State Water Project is, as you all know, the Cross-Valley Canal contractors are dependent on the Delta and contract with DWR and the Bureau, and last, but not least, the Friant system is dependent on the Delta. There would be no Friant system but for the 1939 contract between the exchange contractors, which have to be supplied from the Delta in exchange for San Joaquin River water. So all of the imported supplies in Kern County are dependent on the Delta. There probably is no other area of the state that's more dependent on the Delta than this area. And so this is very important to us. In terms of kind of scoping comments, and very general, and I'm sure that we'll be providing more specific comments by the deadline, but I think it's very important that the right no-project alternative and baseline be identified. And it's important that you keep in mind what has occurred in developing that, and the failure of the federal government, through the Bureau and DWR, to meet the contractual expectations of the contracts that were entered into in

reliance of the water supplies that were expected these many years ago. So as we move forward and you commence the process to prepare the EIR and EIS, I think it's extremely important that the no-project alternative and baseline be properly framed. Again, we thank you for coming to Kern County and providing the opportunity for us to interact with you a bit. And we all know that Brent is very much involved in this process and will be providing information to us as this process moves forward. And again, thank you for providing this opportunity. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Anyone else like to make a comment? Okay, I'm not seeing any takers. So with that, we'll adjourn this part of the meeting. I want to thank you all very much for coming. And I'll see you next time. Thanks.

-- MEETING ADJOURNED --