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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PCWA Supports Reforms for CALFED

Auburn - The Placer County Water Agency is continuing to press for changes in the decision-making process of the multi-billion-dollar CALFED-Bay Delta Program.

CALFED is the 11-year-old process which aims to greatly increase the exportation of north state water to Bay Area and Southern California water users by California and federal water officials and Delta-export water contractors.

PCWA officials have expressed increasing concern over a CALFED proposal to impose billions of dollars in new water fees on north state water customers. Agencies, such as PCWA, believe that their water customers should not be saddled with fees to subsidize costs to mitigate conditions in the Sacramento Delta system caused by CALFED's actions.

"The idea of a water user fee unilaterally imposed upon non-beneficiaries of CALFED, such as PCWA water customers, is misdirected and has seriously eroded Northern California support for the entire program," said PCWA Board Chair Pauline Rocucci. "A recommitment to benefit-based funding would be a major step in rebuilding public trust in the CALFED program," she said.

Further, PCWA believes that CALFED officials have clearly underestimated the importance that Sierra Nevada watersheds and their tributaries play as 'solution-areas' in protecting the 'problem-area' of the Delta impacted by CALFED water exporters.

PCWA Director Otis Wollan, whose district includes the American River watershed of the county, says, "CALFED needs to reverse course and place top priority

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on understanding watershed issues and impacts by catastrophic fires, erosion and flooding upon source-water areas. Healthy watersheds should be seen as an asset rather than being viewed as low to no priority by CALFED officials.”

In May, PCWA General Manager David Breninger, along with 36 other water managers, wrote to state officials and Governor Schwarzenegger seeking changes in CALFED policy. They sought support that CALFED water users who receive “benefits” from CALFED pay the costs for Delta system impacts. The governor responded that he favors a balanced CALFED funding plan that is “consistent with the beneficiary-pays principle.” Breninger said PCWA is very pleased with the governor’s reply.

More recently, the governor asked the state’s Little Hoover Commission to investigate CALFED governance and to make recommendations to improve its performance and public trust.

The commission embarked on a fact-finding effort and will soon hold hearings to identify core governance challenges facing CALFED. To guide the commission’s inquiry, public entities familiar with CALFED, such as PCWA, were asked to respond to a detailed 17-point questionnaire. The PCWA Board of Directors on Aug. 4 applauded the commission’s reform efforts and authorized submittal of an agency written response.

PCWA’s reply to the commission focuses on two key issues: 1) the CALFED governance process should include a representative from the Sierra Nevada watershed to assure a voice for source-water agencies and to speak on watershed stewardship matters, and 2) assurance that CALFED governance adopts the “beneficiaries-pay” principle so those water users who benefit from CALFED water exportation pay the costs for benefits received while customers who don’t receive benefit don’t pay.

The commission has scheduled three public hearings on CALFED. An overview of the program’s purpose is slated for Aug. 25, governance issues will be heard Sept. 22 and alternatives and alignment will be considered Oct. 27. For meeting location and time and other information, contact the commission at 916-445-2125 or little.hoover@lhc.ca.gov.

PCWA’s response to the commission is available to the public by calling the Breninger’s office at 530-823-4860.