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THE CALFED STORAGE PROGRAM: A NEW ERA OF WATER STORAGE IN CALIFORNIA

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ABSTRACT: The explosive growth that California experienced in the 20th Century was largely made possible by the construction of numerous dams and reservoirs on major rivers in the Central Valley for water supply, hydropower generation, and flood protection. The combination of hydrologic modifications from the operation of these dams, extensive agricultural and urban development in the floodplains, and introduction of non-native species have contributed to significant environmental effects on numerous species in Central Valley rivers, particularly salmon. As California water leaders continue seeking solutions to address both environmental and water supply sustainability, the role of water storage, both surface and groundwater, is being reconsidered in the context of state-wide and regional integrated water management.

In one of the most ambitious integrated water management plans in the nation, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a framework to implement actions that protect water supply reliability, water quality, and at-risk species to restore habitat in the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and its watershed, the Central Valley. Under the CALFED Storage Program, the Bureau of Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources are conducting four planning and feasibility studies for potential surface storage projects as an integral part of California's water management strategy. These new multiple purpose storage opportunities are formulated to be adaptive to a variety of potential future conditions, including changing regulatory conditions and environmental needs, climate change, alternative Delta conveyance and management, and disaster/emergency response scenarios.

This presentation will discuss the evolving role of regional water storage in California's water management strategies, and present an overview of the four ongoing CALFED surface water storage feasibility studies in the Central Valley.

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