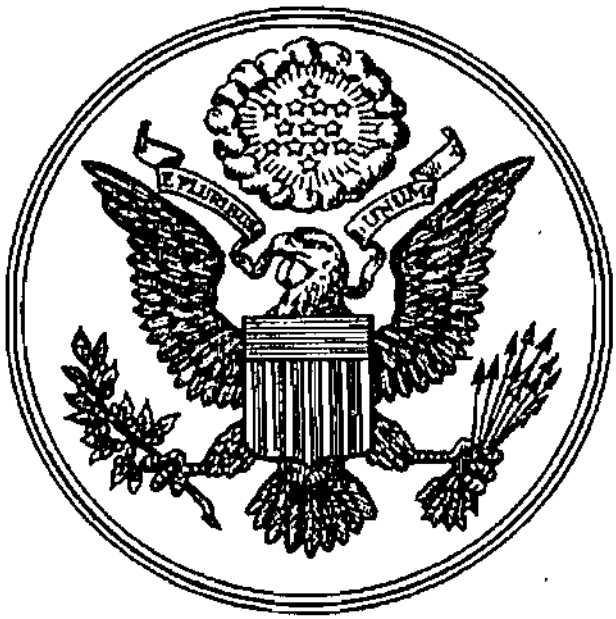
The U.S. Department of the Interior Documentary Supplement 1993-2001

Box #3



Prepared for the Clinton Administration History Project
Washington, DC
2000

The Documentary Supplement to the Narrative History of the Department of the Interior during the Clinton Administration (1993-2001) is contained in Boxes #2 and #3 of the three (3) boxes submitted.

Box #1 contains two (2) copies of the Narrative History itself, and two copies (2) of a complete list of documents contained in the Documentary Supplement. The location of each document in the Documentary Supplement is indicated in the master list.

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Coral Reef Initiative

1. Department of the Interior memorandum dated December 22, 1997, recommending among other things that a coral reef protection effort be announced and launched by the Clinton Administration at a national oceans conference then under discussion.

2. Interior Department coral reef initiative incorporated into the May 7, 1998, "Working Draft" of the National Ocean Conference potential deliverables (including suggested edits in hand by the Interior Department).

3. Undated draft of a potential coral reef executive order prepared by NOAA staff.

4. Memorandum from Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt dated May 21, 1998, recommending processing of a draft executive order on coral reef protection prepared by the Department of the Interior. The draft order dated May 20, 1998 is attached to the memorandum and includes provisions establishing the Coral Reef Task Force and mandating requirements for Federal agencies in protecting coral reefs.

5. Department of the Interior memorandum to the Office of Management and Budget dated June 5, 1998, recommending revisions to the Interior Department draft executive order based on review of agency comments. Among other things, the memorandum recommends replacing a "no-net-loss" standard for Federal agency actions with a non-degradation requirement, which was adopted.

6. Executive Order 13089 of June 11, 1998, on Coral Reef Protection.

Invasive Species

1. Letter to Vice President Gore dated April 25, 1997 from several hundred scientists requesting him to address the problem and to establish a commission for that purpose. Several U.S. Senators also wrote Vice President Gore supporting the scientists' request.

2. Letter from Vice President Gore dated June 17, 1997, to Senator Bob Graham stating that he was directing the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Agriculture, and Secretary of Commerce to develop a strategy for invasive alien species. The Department of the Interior draft of the letter dated June 9, 1997 is also enclosed. The Vice President sent similar letters to other Senators and to representatives of the scientists that signed the letter under Tab 1.

3. "Campaign Against Alien Invasive Species: An Action Plan for the Nation" dated October 7, 1997. This document was prepared in response to Vice President Gore's request for a strategy and, among other things, recommends issuance of an executive order.

4. Speech by Vice President Al Gore delivered at a meeting of the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York City on April 20, 1998. The speech addresses invasive species and the need for action on them.

5. Memorandum dated May 27, 1998, from Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget recommending processing of an executive order on invasive alien species. A draft executive order dated May 22, 1998 is attached to the memorandum.

6. Federal agency comments on the May 22, 1998, draft executive order recommended by Secretary Babbitt.

7. Department of the Interior revised draft executive order dated July 10, 1998, faxed to the Office of Management and Budget on that date by the Science Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior.

8. Federal agency comments on an Office of Management and Budget revised draft executive order dated September 8, 1998.

9. Office of Management and Budget revised draft executive order dated September 28, 1998, and Department of Defense comments sent to the Department of the Interior for review.

10. Department of the Interior response to the Office of Management and Budget dated September 28, 1998, on the Department of Defense comments, and comments on the draft executive order itself dated September 29, 1998.

11. Office of Management and Budget revised draft executive order dated January 25, 1999.

12. Executive Order 13112 of February 3, 1999.

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3. Letter to Bruce Babbitt from the National Governors Association, July 8, 1998

4. Letters to Governors from Bruce Babbitt, July 1994

5. Letters from Governors to Secretary Babbitt regarding the proposed rule on Indian Gaming, October 1997

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6. Letter from Secretaries Babbitt and Glickman to Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council, June 24, 1997

7. Letter from Secretaries Babbitt and Glickman to President Clinton, July 24, 1997

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8. Memo to Assistant Secretaries, Directors and Bureau Heads, w/ attachments: "National Initiative on Invasive Plant Species," June 29, 1995

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9. Letter from Governor Gray Davis to Secretary Babbitt Re: Central Valley Improvement Act, Section 3406(b)(2), November 6, 1999

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10. Letter from John Berry to Melanne Verveer, Office of the First Lady, Re: PAR, November 17, 1998

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11. Memo to White House: "Lands Legacy Outreach Plan," by Grace Garcia, February 6, 1999

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12. Letter to California Coastal Commission from Secretary Babbitt, August 13, 1999

13. Letter to Secretary Babbitt and Walt Rosenbusch from California Coastal Commission, July 27, 1999

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14. Letters to from Secretary Babbitt to Governors, February 15, 2000

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15. Letter from Secretary Babbitt to the Western Governors Association, April 29, 1999

16. Letter from the Western Governors Association to Secretary Babbitt, January 11, 1999

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1. Endangered Species Reintroductions and Reclassification—list of species that have been de-listed/reclassified with a brief explanation

2. U.S. Supreme Court *Sweet Home* Decision

3. U.S. District Court Decision on Removal of Wolves from Yellowstone National Park

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4. Parks for Tomorrow: President Clinton's Plan to Restore and Preserve America's National Parks (4/22/96)

5. A Comprehensive Plan for the Restoration of the Everglades (1/19/96)

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1. Statement of Michael Penfold, Assistant Director, Land and Renewable Resources before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Natural Resources, on Reforestation and Reinvestment on public lands and National Forests of the Pacific Northwest (3/30/93)

2. Statement of Michael Penfold, Assistant Director, Land and Renewable Resources before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Natural Resources, on H.R. 1602, A bill "to reform the management of grazing on the public range lands' (4/20/93)

3. Statement of Robert Armstrong, Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, House Committee on Natural Resources, on a hearing on unreclaimed Hardrock Mines (8/5/93)

4. Statement of Mike Dombeck, Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Resources, on H.R. 1713, The Livestock Grazing Act (7/11/95)

5. Statement of Michael Dombeck, Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management before the Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, Senate Committee on Appropriations, on the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (5/7/96)

6. Statement of Maitland Sharpe, Assistant Director for Renewable Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management before the Subcommittee on Livestock, House Committee on Agriculture, on the Range Management Program (9/17/97)

7. Statement of Maitland Sharpe, Assistant Director for Renewable Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Resources, on the Range Management Program (9/30/97)

8. Statement of Bob Armstrong, Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management before the Subcommittee on Energy Research, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, on MMS Proposed Oil Valuation Rule (6/11/98)

9. Statement of Henri Bisson, Assistant Director, Bureau of Land Management, before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Resources, on Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants (6/24/99)

10. Statement of Charles Wassinger, Associate Director, Bureau of Land Management Oregon-Washington State Office, before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, House Committee on Resources, on Proposed Federal Mining Policy Changes and Their Effect on the Mining Industry and on State and Local Revenues (9/11/99)

15. June 1, 2000 — Secretary Babbitt Makes Four New Monument Recommendations to President Clinton

16. May 9, 1996 — Engaging Stakeholders to Reinvest in Prescribed Wildland Fire: Remarks by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt at the Tall Timbers Conference (Boise, ID)

17. March 24, 2000 — Remarks by Bruce Babbitt to BLM Interactive Town Meeting, Phoenix, AZ

18. Memorandum dated 2/6/97–Upgrading Hardrock Mining Environmental Regs

19. Letter to Bruce Babbitt, Bob Armstrong and Pat Shea dated 10/2/97, regarding BLM current plans to revise the regulations governing surface management of hardrock mining 43 CFR Section 3809

20. Letter to Bruce Babbitt dated 1/29/99–re: refusing request to delay publication of the proposed revisions to BLM's surface mgmt. rules until after completion of the National Academy of Sciences study

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1. Interior Solicitor John Leshy's Speech on the Future of Reclamation

2. Record of Decision of Secretary Babbitt for the Operation of Glen Canyon Dam Environmental Impact Statement

3. Record of Decision–Animas La Plata

4. Bureau of Reclamation Record of Decision: Columbia River System Operation Review

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5. May 27, 1994–Memorandum: Downsizing of the Geologic Division, by Ben Morgan

6. May 11, 1993—Memorandum: Authority to Create National Biological Survey

7. May 17, 1993—Organizational Preparations for the Creation of the National Biological Survey, by Bruce Babbitt

8. September 29, 1993—Establishment of the National Biological Survey, by Bruce Babbitt

9. September 29, 1994—Amendment 1 to Establishment of the National Biological Survey, by Bruce Babbitt

10. September 30, 1996—Transfer of the National Biological Service to the United States Geological Survey as a new Biological Resources Division, by Bruce Babbitt

INDIAN AFFAIRS

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

1. Elouise Pepion Cobell, et. al v. Bruce Babbitt, et. al.

2. *Strategic Plan for Trust Improvement,* April 1997, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, U.S. Department of the Interior.

3. *High Level Implementation Plan,* Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, U.S. Department of the Interior.

4. *Principles for the Discharge of the Secretary's Trust Responsibility,* Secretarial Order No. 3215, U.S. Department of the Interior, April 28, 2000.

5. *Two Years After the President's Meeting With Tribal Leaders,* Annual Report of the Administration Working Group on American Indians and Alaska Natives, August 1996.

6. Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Gover's remarks at the Ceremony Acknowledging the 175th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior Building, Washington, D.C., September 8, 2000.

7. Statement of Kevin Gover, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Before the Joint Hearing of the House Resources Committee and Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, on S. 1586, The "Indian Land Consolidation Act of 1999," Nov. 4, 1999.

8. Statement of Edward B. Cohen, Deputy Solicitor, Department of the Interior, Before the House Committee on Resources Concerning H.R. 2743, To Reduce The Fractionated Ownership Of Indian Lands, And For Other Purposes, July 29, 1998.

9. Copy of letter dated June 18, 1997 from Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to President of the Senate Albert Gore, Jr., transmitting a draft bill "To reduce the fractionated ownership of Indian lands, and for other purposes" and the following attachments:

    I. Letter dated March 29, 1995, from Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Ada Deer to tribal leaders regarding a letter from her to landowners dated October 20, 1994, concerning the problems of fractionated ownership of allotted land.
    II. Summary of responses to questionnaire sent with the October 20, 1994, letter.
    III. Letter dated November 29, 1994, from ASIA Deer to owners of allotted land, with questionnaire as attachment, concerning fractionated ownership issue.

POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

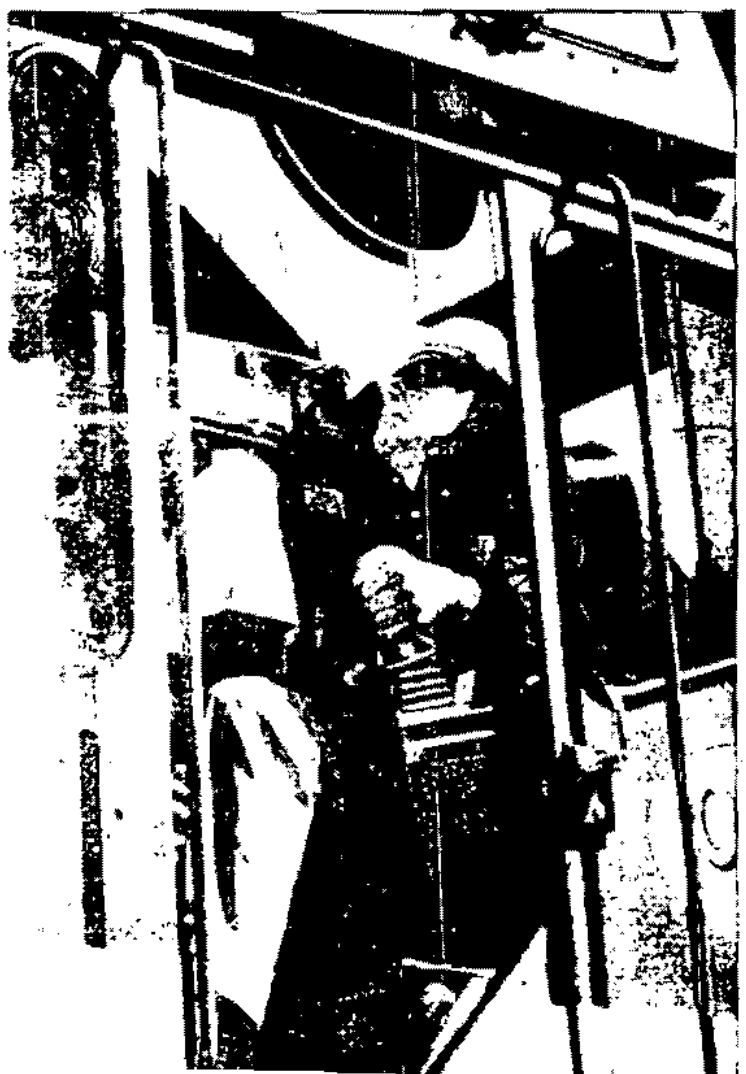
1. The Partnership for America's Resources proposal that would become Lands Legacy

2. Summaries of Congressional Action on Budget

Los Angeles Times

FRIDAY
OCTOBER 13, 2000

Photo by CARLOS [illegible]



The 52-year-old Matilija Dam is cracking with age. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, left, trains the camera as a crane removes the first piece from the structure.

Babbitt Takes Symbolic First Step in Removal of Silt-Choked Matilija Dam

By JENIFER RAGLAND
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

OJAI—Manning the pedals and levers of a towering blue crane, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt pulled a 16,000-pound chunk from the mammoth face of Matilija Dam on Thursday morning, the first symbolic step in the demolition of the aging 20-story-tall structure.

"Now that was real power," Babbitt said with a grin as he wiped sweat from his brow and greeted an applauding crowd of politicians, environmentalists and community leaders. More than 100 people gathered at the top of the dam north of Ojai to celebrate the kickoff of a demonstration project that will test methods for tearing down the concrete structure.

Local dignitaries—including Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) and Ventura County Supervisors Kathy Long and John Flynn—characterized the event as the first real movement toward razing the crumbling structure, a daunting job that could cost up to $170 million.

"This is a historic moment for me," Flynn

Please see DAM, B3

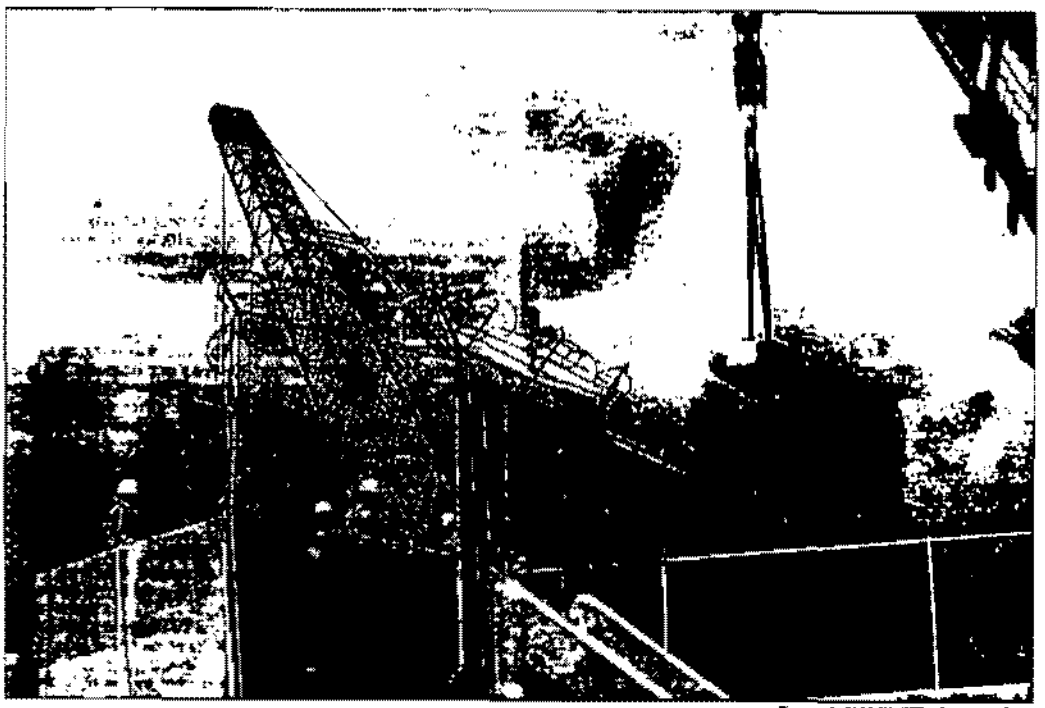


Photo by CARLOS CHAVEZ Los Angeles Times

The first chunk to be removed from the dam, a 16,000-pound concrete slab, dangles from a crane operated by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

DAM: Babbitt Kicks Off Demolition

Continued from B1

said. "It's a step that shows we have the momentum to take that dam down."

Matilija Dam, built in 1948 to provide drinking water to the Ojai Valley and reduce flood hazards on the Ventura River, is now choked with 8 million cubic yards of sand and dirt and is cracking with age.

Environmentalists and political leaders argue that the massive structure blocks the endangered steelhead trout from prime spawning grounds upstream in Matilija Creek and robs Ventura County's beaches of sand.

Babbitt agreed, and promised that in his last 120 days in office the federal government will do its part to see the project through. Officials have estimated it could cost from $22 million to $170 million to remove the dam and the silt behind it, depending on the method used.

"We will produce the resources that will bring your plans to reality," Babbitt said. "The benefits, in the long run, will far outweigh the costs."

Thursday's ceremonial tear-down kicked off a $426,000 county demonstration project, approved by supervisors in August, which aims to determine the best method to remove the dam's concrete face. Three cutting techniques will be tested.

Ron Coons, Ventura County director of public works, said crews began preparing for Babbitt's visit about three weeks ago, but the real work began Thursday and will continue for about a month.

Babbitt promised federal resources for the demolition. "The benefits, in the long run, will far outweigh the costs," he said.

The reservoir behind Matilija Dam is clogged with dirt and sand.

For the past three years, Babbitt has led a nationwide tour to knock down about a dozen obsolete dams, usually carrying a symbolic sledgehammer with him. Matilija, which is 198 feet tall and 600 feet wide, is the largest dam in the country to be targeted for removal.

"When I saw a picture of this thing I knew it was time to bring in the heavy equipment," he quipped, pointing to the massive dam that, along with the mountains of Los Padres National Forest, served as a backdrop for the ceremony. "With Matilija, we're entering the next chapter of dam removal."

And it's an important chapter for the future of Ventura County, said Nick DiCroce of California Trout. The nonprofit group has pushed for the dam's removal so the county's once-plentiful population of steelhead trout can be restored.

"My fantasy is to see abundant schools of steelhead swimming up the Ventura River, past the former Matilija Dam and up into the reaches of the river where they will spawn and continue their life cycle," DiCroce said. He challenged the crowd to remove the dam within five years—about the same amount of time it took to build it in the 1940s. Officials previously estimated the task would take 10 to 40 years.

That is precisely why Babbitt said he made the trek to Ventura County this week, reaffirming his commitment to making it happen sooner.

"I'm absolutely confident that in a number of years I'll be back here as former secretary and a private citizen to celebrate this dam being gone," Babbitt said.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, an agency that Babbitt oversees, is working with other state and federal agencies on the project's feasibility study, which could take another two years to complete.

The colossal amount of sediment stacked behind the dam poses a more perplexing problem than the concrete structure itself, officials said. Possibilities for removing the silt range from building a large conveyor belt that would move material from the dam to the beach for sand replenishment to progressively sawing off chunks of the dam and letting nature take its course.

But while there may be no consensus on the best way to remove the dam, most everyone has agreed it should come down since it was first proposed by environmentalist Ed Henke in his 1998 position paper, "A Case for the Removal of Matilija Dam."

Henke, who grew up in Ventura County but now lives in Ashland, Ore., attended Thursday's ceremony and left feeling "overwhelmed."

"We're finding our place in this great big ecosystem," Henke said. "We have to show the whole world we can do this."

Ojai Valley News

Friday, October 13, 2000

Babbitt visits doomed Matilija Dam

by Lenny Roberts

U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt led a group of dignitaries visiting Matilija Dam Thursday morning, and echoed their collective wish to have the aging structure removed.

The 53-year-old dam, they agree, has outlived its usefulness and become a detriment to the environment and to the natural habitat of wildlife, namely the steelhead trout.

Ranked third on a list identifying U.S. endangered rivers, the Ventura River's survival depends on the dam's removal, according to a report released earlier this year by American Rivers, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting and restoring America's rivers.

The report described Matilija Dam as an "impassable roadblock for native Southern California steelhead runs, while contributing to the erosion of popular nearby surfing beaches."

Speaking in support of the dam's removal Thursday were Supervisors Kathy Long and John Flynn, Brian Miller, aide to Congressman Elton Gallegly (R- Simi Valley), Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson, California Trout spokesman Nick DiCroce and Chuck Raysbrook, regional manager of the California Department of Fish and Game.

Mid-pacific Region, Public Affairs Office
916/978-5107

Babbitt recalled hosting the initial meeting of many of those same officials in Washington in 1999, to consider the need to remove the dam. At that time, Flynn asked for federal assistance to cover the costs of removing the dam, and Babbitt pledged to take the necessary steps to begin the process.

The projected undertaking is the largest of its kind in the United States.

"We must look deeply into the task of restoring our mistakes of the past," Babbitt began. "We have the capacity to envision what once was, and then to undertake the hands-on process of restoring the landscape. It's an act of affirmation and an act of fate so we can live in more harmony with creation.

"And as we undertake the act of restoring the waters and watershed, I think that remarkable things happen. We find that when we restore the waters, we restore our community. And this process of restoration has brought all these communities together," referring to the county and state agencies involved, The California Coastal Conservancy, The Wildlife Foundation, private property owners and local environmental groups.

"So I'm here to say to all of you that I stand in awe and admiration of what you have done, and I hope that we can all, by our presence here today, hold this up across California and the country as a model of what we believe the act of restoration can be.

"I didn't bring my sledgehammer today, because when I first saw a picture of this thing, I thought, 'You've got to be kidding.' "

Although Babbitt did not specifically address the cost and time frame for removing Matilija Dam, he said the effort had begun.

"We begin this effort with the entire

country watching, because this is the first time - this is a new chapter - and we've got to do it right because there are a lot of skeptics out around this country," he cautioned.

He brought applause and laughter from the sun-drenched group of guests by saying, "I'm in the last 120 days of my tenure as secretary of the interior, and that's one of the reasons why I want to blow this sucker up.

"But I think, seriously, that all of us here today, in years to come as this process comes to fruition, are going to look back to this moment and say that we were present at the start. We were here at the creation of a brand-new chapter in American environmental history and the coming century of restoration.

"Keep it up. You're doing great," Babbitt concluded.

After speaking, Babbitt took a quick lesson in operating the massive crane that had been delivered for the occasion, and symbolically removed a 5,000-pound section from the top of the dam.

The 198-foot dam was built in 1947 to provide flood control and fresh water for the Ojai Valley, but massive amounts of sand and silt have accumulated behind the dam, rendering it all but useless for that purpose.

The estimated 7 million cubic yards of sediment choking the reservoir prevents sand from flowing downstream to replenish the coastal ecosystem, and engineers estimate that if the sediment could be piled one foot deep, it would cover 3,000 football fields.

In April, Jim Edmondson, conservation director for California Trout, said that Matilija Dam has evolved into nothing more than a retaining wall, holding enough sediment to add 30 feet of sand to each beach in Ventura County. At its

deepest point, sediment in a mile-long stretch has been measured at 70 feet. Prior to its construction, 5,000 adult steelhead annually returned to the Ventura River. Today, they are counted in dozens

Babbitt urged Gallegly and California's senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein to continue to work to secure federal funding for the removal project that could run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The least expensive and most time-consuming method to restore the river's flow would be to gradually remove the dam, allowing for the natural flow of the materials to the ocean. Another method would be to excavate the material and construct a conveyor system or pipeline to the ocean. The third alternative is to excavate the material and truck it to a landfill or some similar place, with the residual sand transported to the beaches.

If funding is secured, the project could begin as soon as 2003.

Thursday's deconstruction ceremony at the dam cost some $425,000, and was funded by The California Coastal Conservancy, County Flood Control which owns the dam, the state Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, and the cities of Ventura, Oxnard and Port Hueneme.

The Star

HANDS-ON: U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt controls a crane to lift a concrete piece from atop Matilija Dam, north of Ojai, on Thursday. It was a symbolic start to removal of the dam, which will allow silt behind it to eventually replenish sand on county shores.

Staff photo by James Glover II

Babbitt tears into Matilija Dam

REMOVAL: *Interior secretary praises support for project.*

By Charles Levin
Staff writer

Using a crane instead of his usual sledgehammer, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt came to Ventura County on Thursday to lift a chunk off Matilija Dam in a symbolic step toward the largest dam-removal project in U.S. history.

Babbitt has presided over several dozen dam removals so far, often appearing with a sledgehammer to break up the first bits of concrete. But Thursday called for Babbitt to pull a crane lever.

"People will look back to this moment and say we were here at the creation and opening of a brand new chapter in American environmental history and the coming century of restoration," Babbitt told more than 100 onlookers.

Thursday's chunk removal was part of a much-hyped demonstration project that officials hope will draw more attention to the deteriorating 52-year-old dam north of Ojai.

Originally built for water supply and flood control, the dam has become obsolete, robbed beaches of fresh sand, and prevented endangered steelhead trout from migrating upstream to spawning grounds, environmentalists say.

Officials estimate that up to 7 million cubic yards of silt sit behind the dam — enough to fill 437 football fields 1 foot deep.

The dam sits on Matilija Creek, a tributary of the Ventura River, 15.6 miles upstream from the ocean.

At 168 feet high and 620 feet wide, the dam would be the largest ever torn down in the United States, officials say.

Removing the dam gained new urgency this year when the Washington, D.C.-based American Rivers environmental group declared the Ventura River the nation's third most endangered river.

Babbitt joined a host of state and local officials at Thursday's demonstration and praised the strong consensus of support behind the project — a stark contrast to others he has worked on.

"I stand in awe of what you have achieved," Babbitt said.

Dam removal means a chance to "look deeply at the mistakes of the past," Babbitt said. "We've learned that it really works."

For example, after the removal of Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River in Maine two years ago, fish returned within a year, "as if by kind of a primal

memory," he said.

But the previous dam removals have been much smaller, Babbitt said, and Matilija offers the chance to create a model for larger jobs.

Using a crane situated behind the dam, Babbitt on Thursday removed a relatively small slab of concrete from its upper-right-hand corner. With another crane, crews had lifted a sizably larger chunk minutes before.

Crews had precut the slabs on Tuesday with a diamond wire-cutting saw, one of three possible removal techniques the county is testing, said Jeff Pratt, county assistant director of public works. Crews will shave a total of 90 feet from the dam over the next three weeks, he said.

Other possible methods include filling holes in the dam with chemicals that expand and cause concrete to break up, or using a hydraulic jackhammer-like device, Pratt said.

The sediment is a much bigger problem, and officials have no answers yet on how to remove and dispose of it.

Babbitt said toxins often embedded in such sediment can also pose problems. But they're found more often in industrialized rivers, he said.

There have been some forest fires in the Matilija area, which can contribute to toxic runoff, said Federico Barajas, dam program manager with the Bureau of Reclamation. Initial tests of the silt, however, show no toxins, Barajas said. Further tests will follow.

The biggest reason for Thursday's hoopla was to draw attention to the dam itself in hopes of raising more money for removal, Pratt said.

The demonstration project is costing $435,000, split between the county; cities of Ventura, Port Hueneme and Oxnard; the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; and the state Coastal Conservancy.

Matilija Dam

Location: Along Matilija Creek north of Ojai, 15.6 miles from ocean
Year built: 1948
Purpose: Water supply, flood control
Estimated construction cost: $682,000
Actual cost: About $4 million
Initial height: 198 feet
Current height: 168 feet, after being notched in 1965 and 1977
Width: 620 feet
Thickness: 8 feet at crest, 35 feet at base
Original capacity: 7,018 acre-feet
Current capacity: Less than 500 acre-feet
Projected 2020 capacity: 0 acre-feet

Sources: Matilija Coalition, Ventura County Flood Control District, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Complete removal could cost anywhere from $22 million to $200 million over 10 to 40 years, according to a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation study. There's no way the local agencies and nonprofit organizations can marshal that much cash alone.

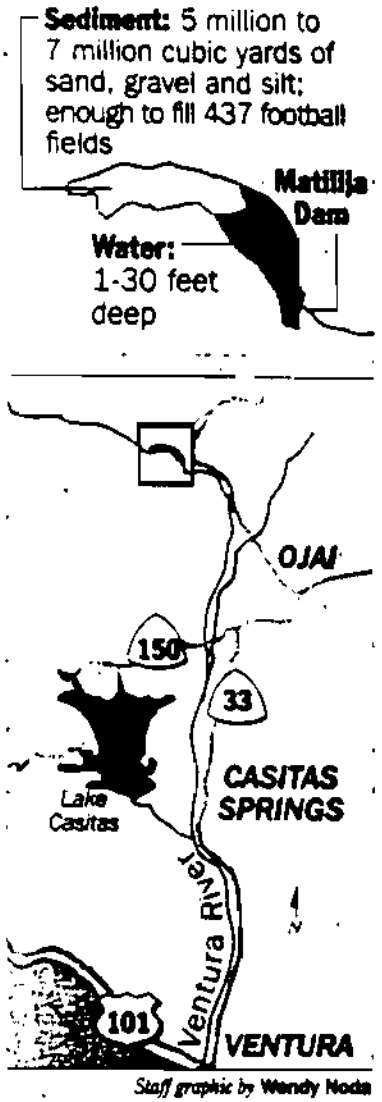
A $3.7 million feasibility study is the next step in the process, said Brian Miller, district chief of staff to Rep. Elton Gallegly, R-Simi Valley.

There are roughly 75,000 dams nationwide, said Babbitt, and competition for federal funding is stiff.

But Babbitt said that if he has his way, Matilija, with its strong local backing, would be "first in line" for federal cash.

Later this month, the Coastal Conservancy is expected to approve contributing another $1.75 million toward the dam's removal, said Bill Ahern, the conservancy's executive director.

Matilija Lake reservoir



Staff graphic by Wendy Noda

Environmentalists said they were optimistic about getting money from a variety of public and private sources, as well as continued federal support — even if George W. Bush wins on Nov. 7.

"We're not going to stop with this one piece," said Mark Capelli, executive director of Friends of the River. "This dam can't stay here forever."

— Charles Levin's e-mail address is clevin@insidevc.com.

On the Net:
www.rain.org/~pjenkin/matilija

NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2000

Thursday October 12 7:57 PM ET
Babbitt Removes Part of Calif. Dam

OJAI, Calif. (AP) - Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt used a crane to tear down part of the Matilija Dam on Thursday, a symbolic move in a nationwide campaign to breach old dams and restore natural fish habitats.

The 200-foot-tall dam holds back Matilija Creek, once a major tributary to the Ventura River. Conservationists say its removal after more than half a century will help restore steelhead runs and return mountain sediment to eroding Ventura County beaches.

``It was a little hard to believe,'' Mark Capelli, a member of Friends of the Ventura River, said after Babbitt removed a 16,000-pound concrete slab from the dam. ``I don't think there are too many people who thought it would be lifted off, at least in our lifetime.''

The dam was built in 1948 about 20 miles north of Ventura to control floods and store water. Since then, officials say it has blocked enough sediment to extend all Ventura County beaches by 30 feet.

It also has blocked steelhead from returning upriver to spawning beds, dropping the population from 2,000 a year before the dam was built to about 100 today.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the project could cost from $180 million if the sediment is hauled to Ventura County beaches to $20 million if officials let nature move the sediment downstream by gradually removing the dam over about 20 years.

The Interior Department has been examining the nation's 75,000 dams to determine which have environmental costs that outweigh their usefulness. Since last year, some two dozen dams have been removed from Idaho to North Carolina, and at least a dozen others are scheduled to go this year.

NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063

Ventura County Reporter

OCT 11 2000

Demolition derby

Babbitt visit raises hopes of Matilija Dam removal

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Congressman Elton Gallegly and state Resources Secretary Mary Nichols will be on hand to witness the removal of a 90-foot long section of Matilija Dam Oct. 12.

by Ryan Holter

U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt will step aboard a crane within the Los Padres National Forest on Oct. 12 as the first significant chunk of the Matilija Dam is ceremoniously removed.

By dismantling the remaining portion of spillway that once spanned the entire width of the dam, officials will demonstrate manageable methods of tackling the largest dam removal project in the United States. Additionally, officials will evaluate costs of the concrete removal and the environmental impacts of their methods during the demonstration project.

The Ventura County Flood Control District, the lead agency in the dam's removal, has selected a contractor to remove the five-feet-thick rim of concrete, measuring 90 feet long at the top of the dam. The targeted section is above the water flow of the dam and will be sliced into roughly 16,000 pound sections. The debris will be temporarily stockpiled behind the dam until it can be hauled away and recycled.

Dam removal supporters hope Babbitt's visit will bring state and local officials together to illustrate the significance and immense scale of removing a dam measuring 180 feet in height and 920 feet in width.

"It is an important step in bringing momentum to the process of decommissioning the dam," said Sergio Vargas, a senior engineer with the Ventura County Flood Control District. "It is not an easy task and it would be difficult for the Flood Control District alone to handle something of this magnitude. By having the interest and involvement of the federal governments and other agencies, it will help in the long run to achieve the decommissioning of the dam."

Certainly interest in removing Matilija Dam was boosted in April when the national environmental group American Rivers listed the Ventura River as the third most endangered river in the nation.

"Watersheds, river systems and native fish can't survive in a segmented landscape," Bruce Babbitt said in a written statement. "And that drives us to think of the power of restoration. Of course, that's the reason I've been out on the landscape over the past few months, carrying around a sledgehammer.

"If you have a dam that's going down, I'm going to be there. Dam building is just one example of how we broke up rivers and segmented landscapes. We built 75,000 dams in the course of our nation's development. Yet we don't understand the price that would be paid [for native fish species]."

Babbitt continued, "Dams—the way we look at them and measure their benefits against their costs—take us into the age of restoration."

Congressman Elton Gallegly, California Resources Agency Secretary Mary Nichols and other local officials will join Secretary Babbitt at the demonstration. It is this attention from key political figures which supporters hope will prioritize the Matilija Dam nationally and provide funding to meet the continuing costs as estimates for the total dam removal soar from $20 to $180 million.

In comparison, removal of the brim during the Oct. 12 demonstration project will cost $450,000. Funding is provided by grants from the California Coastal Conservancy, Ventura County Flood Control district, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the cities of Ventura, Port Hueneme and Oxnard.

A series of studies will follow the demonstration project and are necessary before any further dam dismantling is done. A study will examine the characteristics of the estimated six million cubic yards of sediments trapped behind the dam—sediment best placed on Ventura's eroding beaches 10 serpentine miles downstream. Sediment is expected to consume the remaining water capacity of the reservoir behind the dam in 15 to 20 years.

"The Bureau of Reclamation has conducted preliminary studies and will likely continue to if the funding comes through," said Paul Jenkin, coordinator of the Surfrider Foundation's Ventura chapter. "There appears to be strong support for the removal by agencies throughout Ventura County and from the California Coastal Conservancy who has provided funding for the demonstration project."

At the demonstration, more than 100 people are expected to crowd together at the space-restricted dam site. In anticipation of the limited public access, the Matilija Coalition, a collaboration of local environmental groups, is organizing a separate public tour on Saturday, Oct. 14, from 10 a.m. to noon. The tour will include a presentation from a Ventura County Flood Control District engineer and an interpretive walk by a local naturalist examining the historical and current ecological issues surrounding the dam.

"Dams play an interesting role in an entire ecosystem when they are constructed, effecting more than the flow of sediment," Paul Jenkin said. "Because dams restrict migratory fish such as the salmon and steelhead [trout] that rely on free-flowing rivers, salmon fisheries on the West Coast are in dire condition today. The Endangered Species Act really requires something be done about it, and dam removal is the only way to solve that problem." ■

Friday October 6 4:56 PM ET
Babbitt in Calif. for Dam Removal

By JOHN HOWARD, Associated Press Writer

ANDERSON, Calif. (AP) - Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt took his dam-busting tour to Northern California on Friday, starting the demolition of a nearly century-old structure to free miles of flowing water for spring-run salmon.

Saeltzer Dam is a 20-foot high, 90-foot wide barrier across Deer Creek.

Authorities said its removal, authorized by the state and federal organization called CalFed, will improve flow along a nine-mile stretch.

``We are making water conservation history today,'' Babbitt said.

State Resources Secretary Mary Nichols agreed.

``The dam was useless. It's silted up, and it's not fulfilling its purpose,'' she said.

About 12 miles of prime salmon spawning habitat lie behind the dam, which was built in 1903 about 150 miles north of Sacramento. Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon were listed as a threatened species last year under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The removal project will cost about $5.8 million. The creek should then produce about 13,000 salmon yearly, officials said.

Babbitt has presided over similar dam removals throughout the country, actions generally supported by conservationists who say the dams are an impediment to healthy fish populations.

Since last year, some two dozen dams have been removed from Idaho to North Carolina, and at least 18 others are scheduled to go this year.

In California, taking out the 20-foot-high Saeltzer is a landmark project: It is the first one to begin under CalFed, which was set up six years ago to bring peace to California's interminable water wars.

Moments after Babbitt's comments, a back hoe began pulling chunks of concrete from the dam face. Some restoration work has already been done. A creek channel was straightened and lined with fresh gravel.

Environmentalists say hundreds of dams nationwide have outlived their usefulness and are causing environmental damage.

The issue has fired particular debate in the Pacific Northwest, where environmentalists have called for the removal of four dams from the Snake River to protect salmon spawning grounds.

Clinton administration officials this summer said they will not recommend

breaching the dams for at least eight years to give a salmon recovery plan time to work.

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush (news - web sites) has criticized the administration and Vice President Al Gore (news - web sites) over the issue, saying the dams should not be breached.

Removing dams built on the lower Snake in the 1970s would cut off barge transport, lower reservoirs below irrigation intake pipes and reduce Northwest electricity supplies by about 4 percent.

U.S. makes scientific case to keep Snake dams intact

In a Science article, federal biologists back the government's position that breaching isn't the way to save salmon

Friday, November 3, 2000

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By Jonathan Brinckman of The Oregonian staff
Breaching dams might not be an effective way to save the Columbia River Basin's largest, most-prized salmon from extinction, the federal government's top salmon researchers say in today's edition of the journal Science.

Northwest Endangered Fish
Follow the debate as the Pacific Northwest region struggles to preserve salmon and trout for future generations.

The article by Peter Kareiva, Michelle McClure and Michelle Marvier of the National Marine Fisheries Service lays out the scientific case for the federal government's recommendation this summer that four federal dams on the lower Snake River be left in place.

The evidence the three biologists present is "pretty stark," said Brian Gorman, a spokesman for the fisheries service, the federal agency in charge of salmon recovery. "It certainly suggests that breaching is not a panacea."

Its publication in Science adds credibility to the agency's position, Gorman said Thursday. "Some say we are fudging numbers or doing fuzzy math. This article will dispel those myths."

In July, the fisheries service recommended that the four dams, operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, be left alone while other steps are taken to help salmon. Those actions would focus on restoring the rivers and streams where salmon spawn and restoring the Columbia River estuary, where young salmon feed and grow before striking out to sea.

The fisheries service is to make a final recommendation Dec. 15, five weeks after Tuesday's election. But agency staff said the timing may depend on who wins the presidential race.

George W. Bush, the Republican nominee, has said that he opposes breaching dams. Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic nominee, has not taken a position, but he has said that he would support doing what is needed to prevent extinction of the threatened Snake River salmon stocks.

Opponents of breaching said the Science article bolsters their argument no matter who wins the election.

"We are on a course change in the region," said Bruce Lovelin, executive director of the Columbia River Alliance, an industry group. "Two or three years ago, dam breaching seemed to be the solution. Now, based on this report, it seems the problem is more in the estuary and the ocean."

Conservationists and scientists who work for Northwest tribes and the Oregon and Idaho fish and wildlife departments have said that the four dams must be breached to save Snake River salmon from extinction.

On Thursday, they said the biologists' arguments in Science do not change their opinion.

"This paper is not insignificant, but it is certainly not the end of the game," said Jeff Curtis, western conservation director of Trout Unlimited. "All of this stuff will have to stand up in court."

Curtis and others say they expect to sue the agency about its recommendation, and the authors of the study will have to defend their findings.

The fisheries service biologists' research contrasts with a five-year, $5 million study by federal, state and tribal biologists that concluded in 1998 that breaching the four dams would be the most certain way of saving Snake River salmon. The fisheries service abandoned that study and commissioned Kareiva's research effort.

Kareiva and his colleagues developed a mathematical model to analyze how improved survival at each stage of the salmon's life cycle -- just after hatching in streams, swimming past the dams, lingering in the estuary and growing to adulthood in the open ocean -- would translate into greater overall health of salmon populations.

They found that greater survival in the early life stages and in the estuary has the most dramatic effect on population growth. Under some of their study's assumptions, the improvements in survival from removing dams would be too little to save Snake River spring/summer chinook.

"Remarkably, even if every juvenile fish that migrated downstream survived to the mouth of the Columbia," the salmon would continue to decline, the researchers wrote.

Proponents of breaching said the authors' conclusion that it may not be effective is simply wrong.

Inadequately considered, they said, is the fact that going through the dams' spillways or surviving in the barges used to carry millions of young fish past the dams weakens salmon and makes them more likely to die later, either in the estuary or in the ocean.

"There's a lot of evidence for delayed mortality, but they don't consider it," said Charlie Petrosky, a biologist for the Idaho Fish and Game

Department.

McClure, one of the authors, said the agency doesn't know how large the delayed mortality rate is. The study says breaching the dams could reverse the decline of salmon if the rate was 9 percent or greater .

Supporters of Bush were quick to say that the new report vindicated his opposition to dam breaching. But Gore's backers said they still think the vice president has been right to say that he would be guided by the best science.

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NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior — Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063 — FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 2000

Destruction Is Just the Beginning

An Interview with Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt

Orion Afield: Recognizing the various needs that dams fulfill, and for which they were built, where do you draw the line in deciding which dams should be removed and which should be preserved?

Bruce Babbitt: Well, I don't think there's a formula that you can apply...yet. What we are learning is that each dam has its own history. In some cases, a dam's uses are obsolete. A great example is the Matilija Dam in southern California. It's an easy one because the dam is filled with sediment up to the top. It has no function. Other dams were built clear back at the dawn of the industrial revolution for water power, which is no longer very relevant. I think the best way to determine a dam's usefulness is to use a site-specific analysis, where you look at the uses for which the dam was constructed and the costs that have been and are being paid and then try to make a judgment. Over time, I think the learning curve will flatten out, and we will begin to develop textbook criteria, but we're not there yet.

OA: Fisheries advocates would like to see large-scale hydroelectric projects, like the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River, demolished, but are there examples of smaller, appropriately scaled hydropower dams that could stay in service while minimizing their impact on anadromous fish?

BB: Well, sure. The fish issue, in some cases, can be dealt with by the use of fish ladders. But the difficulties are twofold. Sometimes fish ladders work and sometimes they don't. Then there's the cumulative impact of having multiple dams on the same river system. That's the problem on Battle Creek in California. There are five or six hydro and diversion structures and, although none is very large, the cumulative impact makes it impossible for anadromous fish. There are too many dams on too small a river.

We have 75,000 dams in this country. I don't advocate taking all or even a majority of them out. But there are surely a few thousand out there that have served their purpose, where the maintenance and environmental costs clearly outweigh the benefits. A nice example is the dam at Fossil Creek out in Arizona, which we just reached agreement on. It's a relatively small hydropower project, but it's on a small stream, which basically gets dried up. The entire base flow of the stream is conducted into a flume, which is run down through generators, 10...15 miles downstream. Well, the act of drying up that stream has impacted a large number of native fish, amphibians, and other rare species, even though there are no anadromous fish there.

OA: You say that citizen groups have been responsible for many of the dam removals that have taken place thus far. What advice would you give to a newly formed watershed council that has identified a dam that might be a candidate for demolition?

BB: Start with some research. Learn everything you can about the history of the dam—the documents, function, ownership, uses—all the facts that you can possibly get. Look at the dam in the context of the entire watershed. Make sure you're "pickin' on the right dam," if you will. Once you have all of your facts, start talking to the operator. Then, start talking with any and all of the users who perceive themselves as having a stake in the dam. If you're going up against users of water for hydropower, figure out who they are, what their alternatives are, and how you can make peace with them. There was a diversion dam on Butte Creek in California that came down because, after talking with all of the irrigators who were using water, we were able to figure out a siphon system that

didn't block the river at all. And once that was done, there weren't any conceivable objections to taking down the dam.

Now, the other advice I have is to start talking with local governments, because inevitably they will either have a stake, or perceive themselves as having some kind of stake, in the process. Lastly, I would say check out the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) status. If it's a privately owned hydro dam, it will have a FERC license. And if it turns out that the dam's license is up for renewal in the next five or ten years, then you're really in luck because you'll have some real leverage.

OA: You have said that democratic debate over projects like dam removal creates consensus-building solutions. How has that process worked so far?

BB: Well, it's been quite remarkable. I would say that the prototype was the Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River in Maine, which came out last summer. The discussion on that dam was just beginning when I came to office seven years ago and at that time most of the people in the neighborhood were opposed. Dam removal was a strange, new concept. That dam was built in 1837, and no living person could remember when it wasn't there. But through the process of discussing the issues, people finally got over the psychological barrier of talking about removal.

Did you know?

On average, we have constructed one dam every day since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Once you can get people into a factual discussion, then you're really moving toward some kind of result. But it can be a long process. In the case of the Kennebec River, the participants came to see that the current hydropower benefits were absolutely minuscule and that the fisheries benefits from taking the dam down were absolutely spectacular because, where a dam is located on a river system is an important consideration. This one was located at the very bottom, just a couple miles above the sea. Taking it out opened up a vast stretch of river for endangered Atlantic salmon and other fish.

OA: Anglers involved with the group Trout Unlimited were key advocates for the Edwards Dam removal. How can we work toward collaborations and getting more citizens involved?

BB: For those who are interested, the answer is, look around for your natural allies: fishermen, river users, people who are interested in rafting, kayaking—whitewater enthusiasts—they're in every neighborhood that I've ever visited in the United States. And local environmental groups—look 'em up. Local watershed councils in particular are an obvious place.

In general, I think we need to always remember that dam removal is an act of creative destruction. But it doesn't end with destruction, because what we're talking about is restoration of the river system and that task goes way beyond tearing down a dam. It reaches up and down a river, up and down the tributaries, and, finally, all the way up onto the land. It involves the way we use our forests, our agricultural practices, our urban development trends. And surely the ultimate goal is a holistic look at the entire watershed, and at what we need to do to restore that watershed, and at ways of engaging communities so that together, residents can learn how to live in a more harmonious relationship with their watershed.

OA: You've spoken of restoration work in general as a new social compact with nature. What are some of the broader implications of this belief?

BB: The tacit premise of most of the environmental and preservation work of the 20th century was that there's wilderness out there and we should set it aside, and then, having met our obligation to nature, we can go about living with complete abandon on the rest of the landscape—abusing and misusing it as we please. At the end of the 20th century, conservation biology is teaching us that the world doesn't work that way. Every acre of land and every tributary of every stream is part of the whole, and everything that we do on the land ultimately winds up in the water.

Ultimately, I think it comes back to both a biological understanding and a spiritual act of affirmation, saying that these watersheds are a part of Creation with a capital "C," and that we have an obligation to live respectfully and harmoniously on these landscapes and to see them as a whole. And also to view water as the measure of the quality of our relationship to Creation. Water, in almost every civilization, has a sacramental quality. I think there's a reason for that. Water flows out of the past, through the present, and on into the future. A cup of water tells us about the entire watershed from which it comes, and ultimately judges the quality of our relationship to the landscape.

OA: How do you feel about being called the nation's dam-buster-in-chief?

BB: I like it. The reason I like it is because it gets people's

attention...it's a nice way to awaken an audience. But again, destruction is just the beginning.

OA: There's an organization called the Glen Canyon Institute that is lobbying to drain Lake Powell. Do you think it will happen in our lifetime?

BB: No. It is nonetheless a useful discussion, because there are trade-offs at Glen Canyon that need examination. The day will come when the water that is lost by evaporation will be more valuable than the electrical power that is generated by the dam. And when that day comes, the discussion may turn in some very different directions. But it's going to take time.

that the future can be better, and it's got a lot of power to [illegible] you add to that vision the compelling concept of watersheds and the pervasive, sacramental power of water, I think we're going to see a very exciting century ahead of us.

OA: It seems that you, much more than any of our recent secretaries of the interior, have really championed a way of looking at our resources that goes beyond seeing just pure commodities, that sees each element as a part of the interwoven and interliving organism that we all are a part of. Could you speak to that for a moment?

BB: Obviously, my natural instincts run in that direction. But

Restoration is a very American kind of idea. It speaks of optimism, of a sense that the future *can* be better, and it's got a lot of power to it.

OA: Inevitably, people will speak about the legacy of this administration. What would you like to see future generations highlight as the greatest efforts undertaken during your watch?

BB: Well, I'm not ready to write about a victory yet! But carrying these restoration concepts into reality has been a very important part of what we do, starting in the Florida Everglades. And the restoration that we're now doing in California river systems—these are really big, comprehensive, landscape-level, multi-party efforts to carry restoration to its inevitable and logical extent, which means looking at entire river systems and acknowledging that you start off trying to save one small piece but you quickly realize that you can't save the anadromous fisheries in San Francisco Bay until you've dealt with the agriculture in the Central Valley and the operation of the dams four or five hundred miles away. You can't save the Everglades until you've dealt with the water issues that extend clear up to Orlando. Pretty soon we are drawn right back to this issue of how we relate to the entire landscape.

The process of restoration has a lot of power to change and to enhance our view of nature. Unlike preservation, restoration talks about something really visionary. It says, we can imagine something better. We can go from the status quo and, by looking back; then forward, reach for a new vision. And it's ultimately about us on the land because it's an affirmative act that requires people to expend time and resources in aid of that vision. It's not passive. It's saying that we are inevitably and irretrievably a part of ecosystems and that we must categorically define that relationship. You can't do that by walking away from issues. You have to step in and take affirmative steps. It's a very American kind of idea. It speaks of optimism, of a sense that the future can be better, and it's got a lot of power to it.

I've learned a lot from all the time I've spent outside Washington, in communities around the country. The American people out there on the landscape feel exactly the same way. Now a lot of politicians and policymakers and scientists don't understand that. They go out on the landscape and say, "You need to conserve this region because it has a medicine chest of cancer cures and the possibility for hybrid grains that will feed the world in centuries to come." And that's all fine and good and true. But the utilitarian arguments that are the basis for discussions around Washington—they're not what's on the minds of people out in communities. The public responds to these arguments because they believe that there are deeper values in the landscape. They care about values—values that are grounded in philosophical and religious views of the land. They are grounded in the deluge, Noah's ark, two by two, the covenant with the rainbow—values that are much deeper and much more profound than what you hear scientists and politicians talking about.

OA: Grassroots activists working on these issues are obviously feeling the same way, or they wouldn't go out and work for practically no pay and with very little glory. Your leadership and inspiration have meant so much, and will surely continue well beyond your post as secretary. What do you hope to be doing after your term ends, whenever that may be?

BB: Well, all I can tell you is what I don't want to do. That's as far as I've come. I don't want to practice law, I won't be a lobbyist, and I don't want to run for elected office. Now my wife looks at me across the dinner table and says, "Well... what else do you know how to do?" But the rest of the world is a possibility. ✱

NEWS SUMMARY
U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Communications
Los Angeles Times TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2000

Pact Averts New Hostilities in California Water Wars

■ Resources: Calfed, a 6-year-old effort at compromise, appeared to be unraveling until late-night meetings produced results.

By NANCY VOGEL
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SACRAMENTO—Last week's landmark agreement on how to solve California's worst water woes arrived just in time to revive the nation's most ambitious effort to use consensus, not the courts, to solve tough natural resource dilemmas.

"We have now established a new culture," said U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt on Friday on the steps of the Capitol, where dozens of experts who are paid to fight over the division of California's water among farms, fish and kitchen faucets stood in rare agreement.

In uniting behind a plan forged in late-night meetings by top advisors to Babbitt and Gov. Gray Davis, the traditional water warriors kept alive a 6-year-old federal and state coalition called Calfed that sought to find common ground.

In recent months, it was getting to be known as "Calfail."

"We were facing the abyss," said David Hayes, deputy Interior secretary and key negotiator. "The patience level of folks with the Calfed process had really frayed. The cease-fire was about to be lifted."

The attempt at collaboration through Calfed came only after four decades of legal and political battles over the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, whose rivers are economically and ecologically critical to California. The document released Friday seemed to re-energize environmentalists, farmers and city water officials weary of endless meetings and studies. Many credit Davis and Babbitt with sensing that everyone who had put faith in Calfed needed bold decisions—fast.

"Consensus-building couldn't go any further," said Babbitt, who has made repeated visits to California to keep Calfed on track. The only effort comparable, he said, is in southern Florida's Everglades, where the federal government is weighing an $8-billion plan to restore wetlands and improve farm and city water supplies.

The plan unveiled Friday is the summary of what Calfed leaders expect to adopt in a legally binding document in July. Individual projects within the plan, such as the raising of dams, still face years of regulatory review.

Calfed is expected to last 30 years and cost more than $10 billion in tax dollars and water fees. It was launched in 1994 to make the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta work better as both California's chief wellspring and a major migration path for 10,000-year-old species of salmon.

Political and regulatory fighting over the Delta erupted in the 1970s when biologists began to connect the decimation of native fish to heavy pumping by government water projects serving Southern California. Battles have flared in Congress, courts, the Capitol and assorted federal and state agencies. All worsened in the late 1980s when a drought hit, and several species were deemed to be threatened with extinction. Water supplies to farms and cities were disrupted for the sake of fish.

Finally, in 1994, warring parties agreed to seek ways to bolster fish populations and stabilize the water deliveries upon which so much of the state depends.

"There are analogues," Babbitt said of the compromise, "but there aren't precedents."

When federal and state leaders launched Calfed six years ago, they figured that water users and environmentalists locked in the same rooms for thousands of hours of meetings would reach their own solutions to Delta problems.

That didn't happen. Instead, the Calfed talks began to lose traction.

"It just got too complex," said Felicia Marcus, regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "When it came down to what do we do, it was too hard for them. It's a quantum leap from the dinner-party discussions of the perfect world to what the hell do we do now?"

So the leaders of the 14 different federal and state agencies folded under Calfed emptied the meeting rooms of the so-called "stakeholders" and hammered out a plan.

"We said, this is what we heard over the years from you," said Marcus, "and now this is what we're going to do."

On Friday, Davis laid out a detailed road map for Calfed's next seven years as "the largest and most comprehensive water program in the world." The $8-billion plan calls for the expansion of several reservoirs, billion-dollar investments in water conservation, a $35-million annual water user tax to be imposed by the Legislature, destruction of some small Northern California dams and restoration of wetlands.

It also calls for study of where to build new pipes and pumps to add flexibility to a sprawling plumbing system that shifts water hundreds of miles from Redding to Bakersfield, with the Delta at its heart.

"It requires everyone to share in the sacrifice in order to share in the progress," Davis said.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, credited with helping to forge the agreement, said the occasion "is the first time in seven years I can say I'm optimistic California has a chance to solve her water problems."

Environmentalists say the new plan includes too much construction and dam expansion, which they call an ecologically hazardous throwback to California's historic approach to expanding its water supplies.

But they are pleased by the plan's heavy investment through grants to local governments in such water-saving tools as low-flush toilets. Farmers, who use nearly 80% of California's water, say they would like to see new dams built soon, but are satisfied that expansion of existing lakes will help keep their canals full.

Los Angeles Times

JUN 12 2000

Southern California water providers say they are most concerned about high salt levels in Delta water, which limits their ability to reuse the water. The CalFed plan does not include a "peripheral canal" to draw cleaner Sacramento River water around the tidally influenced Delta, but it contains enough other measures and promises to satisfy the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, said general manager Ronald R. Gastelum, whose agency sells water to serve 17 million people.

"We feel good about this because I think we've succeeded in putting water quality co-equal as a CalFed concern with water supply," he said.

Water: Pushing Into the Future

Forty years after Californians approved construction of the massive State Water Project, Gov. Gray Davis and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt have launched an ambitious plan to satisfy water supply demands for the next 40 years. But this is a far different development than Gov. Pat Brown's project of 1960, a classic engineering scheme of one giant dam and reservoir at Oroville linked by a 444-mile aqueduct to farms in the San Joaquin Valley and water users throughout coastal Southern California. The concept was simple: collect the water in the north and ship it south.

The new plan is just as vital to the state's continued growth and economic viability as Brown's but far more complex and difficult to grasp. Essentially, it is a jigsaw array of individual projects to restore the environment, protect endangered fish, shore up flood control, improve the quality of water shipped to Southern California, reclaim used water and conserve more water both above and below ground as a cushion against drought.

Picture Pat Brown's project as a single telephone line linking two parties at either end of the state. The Davis-Babbitt plan is more like the Internet. The framework—developed in conjunction with a group of state and federal agencies known as CalFed and scores of interest groups—reaches into virtually every corner of the state in many different ways.

Like Brown's plan, financed by a $1.75-billion bond issue, the cost for the CalFed water project is enormous, estimated at $10 billion over the next 30 years.

In Southern California, the plan will stabilize the region's supply so that water rationing is less likely during droughts. Another benefit is the promise of higher-quality water shipped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta near Sacramento to the Metropolitan Water District, which serves about 17 million customers in Southern California. The State Water Project supplies have become increasingly salty as the delta environment has degraded, especially in low-flow periods. The MWD needs good-quality water from the delta to mix with the highly saline water it imports from the Colorado River. CalFed will deliver that.

The new Davis-Babbitt plan is a fragile political structure designed to satisfy the demands of farmers, businesses, urban water managers, fish biologists and environmental groups. Six months ago, it appeared that years of negotiations toward a consensus had failed. But Babbitt refused to let CalFed die. Working tirelessly, and with the help of Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), he enlisted Davis in the struggle. Together, Babbitt and Davis wrote an innovative plan that has broad support, although no group is willing to embrace every element.

Much work remains. The water coalition must hold together and produce a final environmental document this summer. Key parts of the plan must be ratified by Congress and the Legislature. The project will demand a strong governing structure that has the confidence of all the participating parties. The key breakthrough has been made. The only direction for the new California water plan must be forward.

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State, U.S. move to end water wars

$10 billion agreement balances needs of bay, delta, farms, cities

BY PAUL ROGERS
Mercury News

Seeking to end decades of battles over water, one of California's most contentious issues, Gov. Gray Davis and U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt have arrived at a fragile, multibillion-dollar truce among farmers, environmentalists and thirsty cities.

The agreement outlines a $10 billion blueprint for the next 30 years. Its goal: to restore the health of San Francisco Bay and its ecologically struggling delta, the state's largest source of fresh water, while providing a more reliable water source for farms and cities.

The plan does not call for the construction of any major new dams in California, either on rivers or as off-stream reservoirs, according to numerous water experts who have seen preliminary copies of the agreement during meetings in Davis' office this week.

It also abandons the Peripheral Canal, a highly controversial plan rejected by state voters in 1982 to build a 45-mile concrete canal around the eastern end of the delta to more easily move water to Southern California.

Instead, the 50-page summary scheduled to be unveiled at a Sacramento news conference on Friday recommends raising the height of the dam on the state's largest reservoir, Shasta Lake near Redding, by six feet. It calls for enlarging the newly built

near Redding, by six feet. It calls for enlarging the newly built Los Vaqueros Reservoir in Contra Costa County, and flooding various low-lying islands in the delta to create new storage for billions of gallons of water.

The plan also recommends fixing hundreds of miles of aging levees across Northern California, expanding environmental restoration projects in wetlands and salmon streams, and storing more water in underground aquifers. It would widen conservation and water recycling programs statewide and reform complex laws to allow farmers to more easily sell water to cities.

Perhaps most noteworthy Wednesday, however, was that farmers, environmentalists and urban water managers -- all of whom have spent 30 years in lawsuits against each other -- appeared to be generally in agreement that they will support the plan based on what they know so far.

``It's not perfect. But I am optimistic that there is enough there to keep everybody at the table,'' said Greg Zlotnick, board chairman of the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District, which serves 1.7 million people in Silicon Valley, draws 50 percent of its water from the delta.

``This is the milestone that will set the direction for water over the next generation if done right,'' said Mike Wade, executive director of the California Farm Water Coalition, based in Sacramento.

``We have benefited from the planning and projects of the past. It's time for our generation to prepare for the needs of the future,'' Wade said.

Environmentalists were pleased the plan does not call for huge new concrete projects, which they argue kill wildlife to provide taxpayer-subsidized water to farmers. Farmers were pleased they won some new storage. And cities said the plan appeared to help improve drinking water quality and reliability.

``There are things we don't like, but this moves the beast forward,'' said Tom Graff, a senior attorney for Environmental Defense, an Oakland-based environmental group.

``Stepping back from it, I give Gray Davis points for political courage and saying let's move,'' Graff said. ``You can't do something like this without breaking some eggs.''

California's water problem is simple. Much of the state is arid. San Jose averages about 14 inches of rain a year, for example,

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three inches less than Casablanca, Morocco.

Two-thirds of the rain falls in the north. But two-thirds of the people live in the south. From the 1930s to the 1970s, state and federal engineers built the largest system of dams, canals and pumps in the world to move Sierra Nevada snowmelt to Central Valley farms and to cities from San Jose to Los Angeles.

The economy prospered. But the delta suffered.

Delta details

At 738,000 acres, the delta is nearly the size of Yosemite National Park. A network of sloughs, islands, marshes and reclaimed farmland stretching from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay, it was once thick with millions of birds and teeming with salmon. But the delta began to decline in the late 1800s when farmers and city builders diked, drained and filled its wetlands.

Today, the delta still provides a home to more than 54 types of fish, 225 bird species and 52 mammal species.

Yet huge diversions of water -- sucked by pumps near Tracy and sent south in aqueducts -- have driven fish such as the winter-run chinook salmon and delta smelt to the endangered list.

Meanwhile, the delta provides drinking water for 22 million Californians and irrigation for the Central Valley, which produces 45 percent of U.S. fruits and vegetables.

In 1994, after decades of lawsuits, Gov. Pete Wilson and the Clinton administration formed a team of state federal and state agencies known as CalFed to find a solution.

The group, which now includes 18 government agencies, held hundreds of public meetings and conducted countless studies under mountains of paperwork, punctuated with bureaucratic jargon impenetrable to all but the most hardy water lawyers and experts.

Friday's announcement is a summary of CalFed's final environmental impact statement, which is due to be released in July.

Details were still being drafted Wednesday by state and federal officials.

Babbitt's staff did not return calls, and Davis' staff declined comment.

The plan's individual parts require approval from Congress and the state Legislature. Funding will come from tax money, user fees and bond acts, such as the $1.9 billion water bond, Proposition 13, passed by California voters in March.

About the agreement

According to sources familiar with the plan, it includes:

Storage: Providing roughly 1 million acre-feet of new water storage in four projects, the plan would enlarge Shasta and Los Vaqueros reservoirs and flood low-lying delta islands protected by levees. It would draw water from canals in dry years before it flowed into San Luis Reservoir near Los Banos, a lake that cannot be completely drained because of water quality problems at low levels. An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, enough for a family of four for two years.

Environment: Already, CalFed has spent about $220 million in state and federal money removing small dams, installing fish screens on pumps and restoring wetlands. That work would continue. The plan would set up an ``environmental water bank'' of about 380,000 acre-feet. Government officials would buy water and set it aside for fish in dry years.

Guarantees: Farmers support a provision that would establish a ``no surprises'' policy for endangered species. Under the plan, farmers and cities would be guaranteed certain levels of water, even if new fish or other species are added to the endangered list that otherwise could limit their pumping.

Transfers: The plan seeks to reform rules to make it easier for cities to buy water from farmers volunteering to sell it. Farmers use 79 percent of California's water.

Water quality and conservation: The plan calls for new efforts to clean up abandoned mines that pollute streams, and to offer incentives for farmers and cities to reduce runoff from pesticides, fertilizer and other toxins. It directs governments to provide rebates for low-flush toilets and low-flow shower heads, as well as drip irrigation on crops, to conserve water.

Jason Peltier, manager of the Central Valley Project Water Association, said that farmers wanted more limits on the power of federal agencies to reduce water flows because of endangered species. But he said farmers will be pleased that there is some new storage. Davis and Babbitt appear to have found a way to increase storage without drawing mass ire from environmentalists.

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"Certainly there's going to be some grumbling," Peltier said. "But this does move the ball down field. It sets us on a good course to improve our water supply and quality."

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

For more information about CalFed, see http://calfed.ca.gov

Contact Paul Rogers at progers@sjmercury.com or (408) 920-5045.

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Restoring Our Natural Heritage

Bruce Babbitt

I have had a lot of on-the-job training in my seven years as Secretary of the Interior. Especially with endangered species. In the process I was surprised to discover that our rivers are the most neglected and degraded of all of our ecosystems; fully 35 percent of listed species are fish and other aquatic species: the salmon in the Northwest, the delta smelt in San Francisco Bay, the silvery minnow in the Rio Grande, the pallid sturgeon in the Missouri and a great variety of fresh water mussels in the southern Appalachians. The message is plain—it is the rivers that most need our attention.

On reflection it is really no surprise that our rivers are in crisis. Rivers gather their waters from hundreds of tributaries that collect polluted waters from cities, farms, and factories across the watershed. Rivers ignore state lines and other political boundaries, making it difficult to coordinate cleanup efforts. To restore our waters will require a new national partnership for watershed restoration—financed by the rivers themselves from the revenues they generate.

I began to understand rivers as ecosystems when, in 1993, this administration adopted a comprehensive plan to protect the spotted owl in the old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest. In that plan we also took steps to protect the salmon streams in the forests by designating "buffer zones" along streams where no logging could take place. Yet even as we implemented these unprecedented protections, it was becoming clear that they would not be enough to save the salmon.

The Snake River chinook salmon illustrates why. It begins its fall spawning run by leaving the ocean and heading up the Columbia River, through the coastal ranges, across the deserts of eastern Washington, and then up the Snake River into the mountains of Idaho, a journey of some 900 miles. Break one link anywhere in that 900-mile river passage and the salmon is in trouble; the broken link could be an impassable dam, too much sediment washing into gravel spawning beds, increased water temperature from clear-cutting, industrial discharges or a hundred other causes. To save the salmon run we will have to restore the entire watershed.

There are comparable conditions in river ecosystems throughout the country. Consider the Mississippi. Dawn on the Mississippi Delta is a timeless wonder; flocks of brown pelicans cruise low across the waters, the coffee-colored river waters spread in great lobes across the gulf waters. But look closer and you will see a sick river system. The delta wetlands, an area roughly the size of New Jersey—built up over the millennia—are disappearing beneath the waters at the rate of 40 square miles a year. Out in the Gulf, the sparkling sea water is a blue wash over a dead zone that extends westward to Texas, where the marine life is dying, asphyxiated by fertilizer residue washing down from farmlands a thousand miles upriver.

In California the vast inland delta of the Sacramento River is also floundering beneath the waters of San Francisco bay. The salmon and steelhead runs that spawn up into the foothills of the Sierra are disappearing, done in by the cumulative effects of water pollution, dams, bad management practices and excessive diversions.

Down on the Mexican border, the delta of the Colorado River is flat-lining, bled to the brink of biological death by upstream diversions into irrigation canals and aqueducts that feed Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Phoenix. A once lush, riverine forest teeming with migratory waterfowl and the elusive jaguar is now a salt flat.

Early on in this administration, we selected the Florida Everglades as the place to chart a new course of watershed restoration. The Everglades was a logical place to break with the past for at least two reasons: It contains an important and highly visible national park, and Florida residents, eager to protect the environmental values that brought most of them to Florida in the first place, were ready to support a comprehensive restoration program. So I went to south Florida to size up the situation. On an air boat we pushed through saw grass swamps enveloped in a blue-green world of sky and water and land. It all seemed so vast and indestructible.

Now look again. The spectacular array of wading birds, storks, egrets, roseate spoonbills, ibis and herons that have attracted bird watchers since the days of Teddy Roosevelt are now hard to find. Along the drainage canals, huge thickets of cattails, stimulated by phosphorus pollution, are obliterating the sawgrass swamplands. The seaside sparrow is almost extinct, its breeding cycle disrupted by erratic water flows. The discordant notes multiply, echoing through the swamps and cypress forests.

We stopped at one of the hardwood hammocks, small tear-shaped islands, pulled out our maps and charts, and tried to imagine the future. The scientists reviewed ongoing efforts to control phosphorus pollution leaching from the upstream sugar fields. They discussed efforts to modify seasonal water flows to

Mr. Babbitt is Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior

recreate a more natural hydrograph and they spilled out their frustrations, telling me that trying to restore this wetland ecosystem a few acres at a time was bound to fail. Working without an overall plan was like trying to fit the pieces of a huge jigsaw puzzle without the boxtop to guide them.

By the time we left, the sky was thick with thunderclouds, the rain was beginning, and we had agreed on a plan of action. First, we had to settle ongoing litigation over polluted run off from upstream sugar plantations. Litigation drives stakeholders apart, while restoration requires a common agenda; we couldn't pull in opposite directions at the same time. Then the scientists began work on documenting the complex water cycles and ecological relationships within the system. We had to establish a clear restoration objective by reference to the original undisturbed system of which we knew very little.

To lead the restoration effort we turned, fully appreciating the irony, to the Army Corps of Engineers. For it was the Corps that had pushed Humpty off the wall in the first place by chopping up and draining the Everglades in the name of flood control and sugar farming. Last July, Vice President Gore presented to Congress our completed restoration plan, which envisions a twenty-year program costing upward of $6 billion, to be shared equally between the federal government and the State of Florida. That is an unprecedented commitment to ecosystem restoration and the prospects for action on the plan look quite positive. To evaluate the chances of success, one need only to look back at our progress over the last seven years. In that time, the federal-state partnership has spent more than a billion dollars cleaning up phosphorus pollution, constructing giant filtration basins, restoring the Kissimmee River to its natural channel and acquiring more than a hundred thousand acres of land for water storage.

Close on the Everglades initiative came another opportunity, at the opposite end of the country, in California. The problem in California is that exploding urban populations and city farms have pumped so much water out of the river systems that entire rivers are going dry, reducing streambeds to dusty stripes of dead trees.

In California, water litigation is a way of life that began with the gold rush and has never ceased. Now, with the salmon runs failing and the threat of Endangered Species Act regulation, the cities, farmers and environmentalists were once again preparing to fight it out in the courts for their share of the rivers.

Then, at the courthouse steps, the parties paused to reconsider. We then began months of negotiation that resulted in an interim agreement known as the Bay Delta Accord, to govern the water depletion while the parties reached for a broader permanent resolution. As in Florida, the parties (water-thirsty cities in southern California, farmers in the Central Valley, fishers and environmentalists) eventually concluded that piecemeal solutions were insufficient and that only a comprehensive plan addressing all facets of water supply and watershed restoration would suffice. The result is a state-federal partnership known as Cal Fed that is preparing a comprehensive plan for restoration of the entire Central Valley river system. The plan includes levee setbacks and restoration of flood plains, minimum seasonal flow standards, water quality measures and incentives for water transfers, and more efficient water use both in cities and on the farm.

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(Continued on page 211)

Natural Heritage

(Continued from page 149)

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Tribal Rights

(Continued from page 165)

Meeting Conservation Goals through Cooperative Management

Beyond its substantive provisions, the Secretarial Order addresses procedural concerns by encouraging meaningful consultation and intergovernmental partnerships. *See, e.g.*, Secretarial Order, app. §§ 6, 9(A). It directs FWS and NMFS to provide assistance for the development of tribal conservation plans. Secretarial Order § 5, princ. 3(A). When such plans are in place, they should be given deference, *id.* princ. 3(B), and should serve as the basis for developing reasonable and prudent alternatives to activities that would jeopardize a listed species or adversely modify critical habitat, app. § 3(C)(3)(a), (d). In addition, the Secretarial Order encourages intergovernmental agreements and habitat conservation plans for management of multijurisdictional ecosystems and conservation of both listed and sensitive species. *See id.* § 2(E).

Cooperative agreements, including co-management, provide one of the most effective vehicles for harmonizing the trust responsibility with species conservation. Given the United States' trust responsibility and self-determination policy, and the tribes' intimate knowledge of reservation resources, co-management agreements with bilateral decision-making authority are particularly appropriate when federal agencies assert control over wildlife and its habitat on Indian land. Co-management agreements may also be appropriate for some areas outside of reservation boundaries.

Although the Secretarial Order plainly acknowledges that tribes are the proper governmental entities to manage tribal lands and resources, Secretarial Order § 5, princ. 3(B), it falls short of providing them with mutual decision-making authority, even for on-reservation tribal resources. Federal agencies are often reluctant to agree to tribal co-management authority, particularly where public lands are involved, fearing that tribes will exercise a "veto" over what agencies regard to be discretionary activity.

Despite such reluctance, co-management of trust resources has been employed successfully to avoid litigation and to resolve ongoing disputes over treaty rights. For example, federal wildlife agencies have entered into agreements with tribes for the management of fishery resources both within reservations and beyond. The Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, comprised of the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakama Indian Nations, performs an active and integral role in the co-management of salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest. It manages the harvest of specific runs, as well as seasons and hatchery production, and places heavy emphasis on resource management, including instream flows and riparian habitat protection and restoration throughout the basin. *See* www.critfc.org/text/HISTORY.HTM (visited June 24, 1999). The CRIFC employs a well-respected staff of biologists and other scientists, along with enforcement officers. Wilkinson, *Indian Tribal Rights and the National Forests*, 34 IDAHO L. REV. at 448–49. The technical and scientific expertise of CRIFC is "second to none" in salmon management. CHARLES F. WILKINSON, CROSSING THE NEXT MERIDIAN: LAND, WATER AND THE FUTURE OF THE WEST 213 (1992).

Reclamation

Natural Resources & Environment
Winter, 2000

Feature

*147 RESTORING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

Bruce Babbitt [FNa1]

I have had a lot of on-the-job training in my seven years as Secretary of the Interior. Especially with endangered species. In the process I was surprised to discover that our rivers are the most neglected and degraded of all of our ecosystems; fully 35 percent of listed species are fish and other aquatic species: the salmon in the Northwest, the delta smelt in San Francisco Bay, the silvery minnow in the Rio Grande, the pallid sturgeon in the Missouri and a great variety of fresh water mussels in the southern Appalachians. The message is plain--it is the rivers that most need our attention.

On reflection it is really no surprise that our rivers are in crisis. Rivers gather their waters from hundreds of tributaries that collect polluted waters from cities, farms, and factories across the watershed. Rivers ignore state lines and other political boundaries, making it difficult to coordinate cleanup efforts. To restore our waters will require a new national partnership for watershed restoration--financed by the rivers themselves from the revenues they generate.

I began to understand rivers as ecosystems when, in 1993, this administration adopted a comprehensive plan to protect the spotted owl in the old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest. In that plan we also took steps to protect the salmon streams in the forests by designating "buffer zones" along streams where no logging could take place. Yet even as we implemented these unprecedented protections, it was becoming clear that they would not be enough to save the salmon.

The Snake River chinook salmon illustrates why. It begins its fall spawning run by leaving the ocean and heading up the Columbia River, through the coastal ranges, across the deserts of eastern Washington, and then up the Snake River into the mountains of Idaho, a journey of some 900 miles. Break one link anywhere in that 900-mile river passage and the salmon is in trouble; the broken link could be an impassable dam, too much sediment washing into gravel spawning beds, increased water temperature from clear-cutting, industrial discharges or a hundred other causes. To save the salmon run we will have to restore the entire watershed.

There are comparable conditions in river ecosystems throughout the country. Consider the Mississippi. Dawn on the Mississippi Delta is a timeless wonder; flocks of brown pelicans cruise low across the waters, the coffee-colored river waters spread in great lobes across the gulf waters. But look closer and you will see a sick river system. The delta wetlands, an area roughly the size of New Jersey--built up over the millennia--are disappearing beneath the waters at the rate of 40 square miles a year. Out in the Gulf, the sparkling sea water is a blue wash over a dead zone that extends westward to Texas, where the marine life is dying, asphyxiated by fertilizer residue washing down from farmlands a thousand miles upriver.

In California the vast inland delta of the Sacramento River is also floundering beneath the waters of San Francisco bay. The salmon and steelhead runs that spawn up into the foothills of the Sierra are disappearing, done in by the cumulative effects of water pollution, dams, bad management practices and excessive diversions.

Down on the Mexican border, the delta of the Colorado River is flat-lining, bled to the brink of biological death by upstream diversions into irrigation canals and aqueducts that feed Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Phoenix. A once lush, riverine forest teeming with migratory waterfowl and the elusive jaguar is now a salt flat.

Early on in this administration, we selected the Florida Everglades as the place to chart a new course of watershed

restoration. The Everglades was a logical place to break with the past for at least two reasons: It contains an important and highly visible national park, and Florida residents, eager to protect the environmental values that brought most of them to Florida in the first place, were ready to support a comprehensive restoration program. So I went to south Florida to size up the situation. On an air boat we pushed through saw grass swamps enveloped in a blue-green world of sky and water and land. It all seemed so vast and indestructible.

Now look again. The spectacular array of wading birds, storks, egrets, roseate spoonbills, ibis and herons that have attracted bird watchers since the days of Teddy Roosevelt are now hard to find. Along the drainage canals, huge thickets of cattails, stimulated by phosphorus pollution, are obliterating the sawgrass swamplands. The seaside sparrow is almost extinct, its breeding cycle disrupted by erratic water flows. The discordant notes multiply, echoing through the swamps and cypress forests.

We stopped at one of the hardwood hammocks, small tear-shaped islands, pulled out our maps and charts, and tried to imagine the future. The scientists reviewed ongoing efforts to control phosphorus pollution leaching from the upstream sugar fields. They discussed efforts to modify seasonal water flows to *148 recreate a more natural hydrograph and they spilled out their frustrations, telling me that trying to restore this wetland ecosystem a few acres at a time was bound to fail. Working without an overall plan was like trying to fit the pieces of a huge jigsaw puzzle without the boxtop to guide them.

By the time we left, the sky was thick with thunderclouds, the rain was beginning, and we had agreed on a plan of action. First, we had to settle ongoing litigation over polluted run off from upstream sugar plantations. Litigation drives stakeholders apart, while restoration requires a common agenda; we couldn't pull in opposite directions at the same time. Then the scientists began work on documenting the complex water cycles and ecological relationships within the system. We had to establish a clear restoration objective by reference to the original undisturbed system of which we knew very little.

To lead the restoration effort we turned, fully appreciating the irony, to the Army Corps of Engineers. For it was the Corps that had pushed Humpty off the wall in the first place by chopping up and draining the Everglades in the name of flood control and sugar farming. Last July, Vice President Gore presented to Congress our completed restoration plan, which envisions a twenty- year program costing upward of $6 billion, to be shared equally between the federal government and the State of Florida. That is an unprecedented commitment to ecosystem restoration and the prospects for action on the plan look quite positive. To evaluate the chances of success, one need only to look back at our progress over the last seven years. In that time, the federal-state partnership has spent more than a billion dollars cleaning up phosphorus pollution, constructing giant filtration basins, restoring the Kissimmee River to its natural channel and acquiring more than a hundred thousand acres of land for water storage.

Close on the Everglades initiative came another opportunity, at the opposite end of the country, in California. The problem in California is that exploding urban populations and city farms have pumped so much water out of the river systems that entire rivers are going dry, reducing streambeds to dusty stripes of dead trees.

In California, water litigation is a way of life that began with the gold rush and has never ceased. Now, with the salmon runs failing and the threat of Endangered Species Act regulation, the cities, farmers and environmentalists were once again preparing to fight it out in the courts for their share of the rivers.

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Dam removal will be an important part of river restoration programs throughout the country. There are more than 75,000 large dams on our river systems, many of them built a century or more ago without regard to destructive impacts. Dams are not the pyramids of Egypt. They are not meant to last forever, and when they have served their purpose they should come down.

The pace of dam removal is accelerating. In Maine, the Edwards Dam at the mouth of the Kennebeck River, built in 1937 to power textile mills, has just been breached, opening several hundred miles of prime river habitat for salmon, shad and herring. In Washington State a utility company has just announced an agreement to remove the Condit Dam at the mouth of the White Salmon River. Two dams on the Elwah River that block salmon passage into the heart of Olympic National Park are soon to come down.

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Water politics enters greener era

State-U.S. pact signals shift to conservation

BY PAUL ROGERS
Mercury News

Egypt built pyramids. California and the arid West built huge dams and canals.

For decades, water planning in California meant oceans of concrete. Men in horn-rimmed glasses -- driven by powerful politicians and farm leaders -- constructed the world's largest plumbing system to move water from wetter Northern California to farms and cities across the south and Central Valley. They built aqueducts 500 miles from Redding to Bakersfield, pumps to make rivers run backward and hundreds of massive dams.

Now driven by endangered species concerns, soaring construction costs and the steady urbanization of California, that era has ended.

Today in Sacramento, Gov. Gray Davis and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt are scheduled to unveil a $10 billion, 30-year blueprint for California's water future.

The document follows five years of meetings with farmers, environmentalists and cities. Under the name ``CalFed,'' the effort seeks to restore the environmentally struggling San Francisco Bay and its delta, California's largest source of fresh water, while at the same time providing for thirsty farms and the state's relentless population growth.

CalFed calls for no new dams and commits to no new reservoirs, however. It kills outright the controversial Peripheral Canal, a 40-year-old plan to build a concrete aqueduct around the eastern

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40-year-old plan to build a concrete aqueduct around the eastern end of the delta to more easily move water south.

Instead, Davis and Babbitt will champion such environmentally soft approaches as water conservation and recycling, storing water in underground aquifers, restoring wetlands and reducing polluted runoff. New water storage would not come from ambitious engineering feats, but rather through expanding reservoirs at Shasta Lake and Los Vaqueros in Contra Costa County.

Theirs is another step away from the trend to conquer nature to keep California's taps flowing, a trend that is going the way of wingtip shoes, manual typewriters and hula hoops.

``There has been a shift,'' said David Hayes, deputy interior secretary. ``It is a huge shift. In the past, the assumption was that when you had a water problem you built another dam. The equation has changed.''

Water experts contacted Thursday said a series of events has given California a more green mind-set when it comes to water.

``What happened?'' asked Rep. George Miller, D-Concord. ``California filled up with 33 million people. They want recreation. They want fishing. They want their rivers to flow.

``There are competing interests now that were not present in the early days,'' Miller said. ``Before, California's water policy was in the hands of a few growers and powerful politicians. Today you have environmentalists, fishermen, loggers, boaters, cities and taxpayer groups at the tables. And you cannot turn the clock back.''

Without its dams and canals, arid California would be like Wyoming. But on many major California rivers, salmon runs, blocked from swimming upstream to spawn, have fallen 90 percent since the 1940s. Dams also submerge thousands of acres of wildlife habitat. Despite the protestations of farmers, only six major dams have been built in California in 20 years. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was president, that many were completed every month across the West.

In less than two generations, the American West has gone from being a region that saw the most furious dam-building, river-conquering culture that human civilization had ever known to a place where water districts now hear arguments about whether to tear dams down.

``Our earlier efforts at bringing productivity to agricultural land did in fact have some adverse environmental consequences,'' said Douglas Wheeler, former resources secretary under Gov. Pete Wilson.

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"We've reached the point of no return," Wheeler said. "It is not economically or politically acceptable to contemplate the old solutions."

Philosophical shift

Now the philosophy is to get water from conservation measures, such as installing low-flush toilets and lining irrigation canals with concrete to prevent water loss. Also, Davis and Babbitt are trying to ease complex rules so that farmers, who use 79 percent of California's water, can voluntarily sell more to cities.

Meanwhile, more people live in California today than in all of Canada. With 34 million residents, the nation's most populous state has doubled in residents since 1961.

Driven by high immigration rates and a booming economy, California has been growing by an average of 525,000 people a year for the last decade. That's the equivalent of adding a new San Jose every 18 months. Officials estimate that the state population will reach 47.5 million by 2020. All those people will need water.

"Now we are in uncharted territory," Wheeler said. "These new solutions are untried."

Among the reasons for the greening of California's water politics:

The environmental movement. When President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, environmentalists were given a weapon of unprecedented power to stop dams and limit pumping from the delta and other waters if fish and wildlife would be harmed.

Fifty years ago, the conservation movement was largely populated by a few clubs of hikers and bird-watchers. Today, environmental groups have budgets in the tens of millions of dollars, public relations machines and teams of lawyers.

Money. Half a century ago, powerful congressmen sought to have dams and other water projects built in their districts. The federal government paid nearly all the costs. But in 1986, President Reagan shifted funding formulas so that local governments now pay a third or more of the price tag. Dams can cost more than $1 billion.

"The era of big concrete is over," said Steve Ellis of Taxpayers for Common Sense in Washington, D.C. "In many dam projects, a huge amount of federal tax dollars go to benefit just a few people."

Public awareness. Towering up to 700 feet tall, dams tamed wild

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rivers like the Columbia and the Colorado. They provided jobs during the Depression and helped win World War II by generating electricity for aluminum production -- and the Manhattan Project. The water they provided bloomed arid landscapes, enabling California to become the nation's richest agricultural state and to build vast cities on scrub, tumbleweed land.

Today, however, America is at peace and is prosperous. Millions of Americans hike, kayak and raft whitewater.

Population shifts. In 1950, 20 percent of California's population lived in rural areas. Today only 7 percent do. Urban dwellers have no experience with farms and do not need agriculture to make a living.

Meanwhile, Silicon Valley, Hollywood and other economic engines dwarf farm profits, using only a fraction of the water.

Productivity difference

``The same unit of water in an urban center promotes vastly more economic productivity than in a rural setting," said Marc Reisner, author of ``Cadillac Desert," a seminal book about western water.

``Ag has the least value and creates the fewest jobs," Reisner said. ``They had power way out of proportion in the past because the whole idea of building dams seemed so glamorous to us. But now practically everything tilts us in the other direction: environmentalism and recreation."

That irks farmers.

``It's a shallow way of measuring to say a microchip costs more than a strawberry," said Dave Kranz, a spokesman for the California Farm Bureau Federation. ``The whole consumer economy is built around that notion that food should stay inexpensive.

``Would you say Mike Tyson is more valuable than a neighborhood schoolteacher because he earns more money?"

Farmers are happy that the Davis-Babbitt plan calls for new storage by raising some existing dams, Kranz said. But he is worried that if newer sources are not constructed soon, come the next drought, cities will muscle water away from farmers, wrecking rural economies.

Reisner agrees that new off-stream reservoirs should be built. Constructing the huge Sites Reservoir in Colusa County, which could cost $3 billion or more, should be done in exchange for taking down a major dam such as Englebright on the Yuba River

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that halts salmon runs, Reisner said.

For now, the CalFed plan is a fragile truce in the state's long running-water wars.

"The CalFed plan is focused on the environment," said David Lewis, executive director of Save San Francisco Bay Association. "We're starting to restore habitat but we haven't restored fish yet. The proof will be in the results."

Contact Paul Rogers at progers@sjmercury.com or (408) 920-5045.

NEWS SUMMARY
U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Communications
PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063
JUN 8 2000
Los Angeles Times
THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2000

California, U.S. Plan Sweeping Water Project

By NANCY VOGEL
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SACRAMENTO—Gov. Gray Davis and U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt are scheduled Friday to push forward a sweeping state and federal water project by proposing new steps to expand water supplies and save endangered fish in Northern California.

They will announce a plan that would raise Shasta Dam to expand the state's largest reservoir and give government biologists more money and clout. While state and federal officials have made similar announcements in the past, none have sketched plans as detailed and realistic as these, government officials and interested parties agree.

The long-awaited draft plans, five years in the making, is the latest chapter in a government campaign expected to cost tens of billions of dollars over the next 30 years to expand reservoirs and restore rivers. Each of the major projects, including those to be proposed Friday, would face years of environmental and legislative review.

The plan sets forth an unprecedented attempt to clean up and bolster the Northern California water supplies upon which much of the state's trillion-dollar economy depends—while at the same time making up for the environmental damage wrought by decades of some of the most drastic rerouting of rivers anywhere.

"This is a good framework we can move forward on and then work on details," said Timothy H. Quinn, deputy general manager of the Metropolitan Water District, wholesaler of water to 17 million people living from Ventura to San Diego counties.

Issued by a federal-state umbrella agency called CalFed, the plan was still being revised late Wednesday by top Davis and Babbitt advisors.

One idea under debate is a "user fee" to fund environmental restoration that could mean slightly higher water bills for millions of Californians. Business, urban and farm groups warned CalFed officials that such a fee without a connection to specific benefits would kill support for the plan.

In their formal Friday announcement, Babbitt and Davis are expected to propose an "environmental water account" with enough to supply nearly 2 million residents a year to be used at the discretion of federal and state biologists charged with recovering populations of Chinook salmon, Delta smelt and splittail.

The water would be purchased from willing sellers such as Sacramento Valley irrigation districts with generous water rights. That water would then be used to guarantee that cities and farms dependent upon Delta water face no emergency cutbacks in supplies due to fish protections.

Other proposals in the plan include:

- Raising Shasta Dam near Redding by 6 feet so that Shasta Lake can hold back enough additional water to supply 1.5 million people for a year.
- Investing up to $4 billion in federal, state and local funds over the next seven years in water conservation and reclamation.
- Buying up to 35,000 acres of poorly drained San Joaquin Valley farmland and halt irrigation there to help clean streams that drain to the Delta.
- Studying what kind of pumps and pipes and agreements would be necessary to allow Southern California water districts to exchange some of their Delta water supplies for cleaner Sierra runoff used by southern San Joaquin Valley farmers.
- Building mini-reservoirs on the eroded, bowl-like islands of the Delta to store winter flood flows that could be released in drier times.

Babbitt and Davis also are expected to call for greater study—but not necessarily implementation—of several more controversial ideas. They include the building of a new reservoir in the Sacramento Valley and construction of a short canal on the Sacramento River that would guarantee delivery of cleaner water to Southern California, which seeks the best quality water possible from Northern California. This water is blended with supplies from the notoriously salty Colorado River, another major source of the imported water that sustains cities in Southern California.

The document set for release Friday does not legally bind the 14 federal and state agencies folded within CalFed. Instead, say those working on the plan, it is a summary of the direction CalFed intends to take in July when Babbitt and Davis, the leaders of the joint effort, choose among alternative plans described in federal and state environmental documents still being written.

"It's OK they're going forward and putting something out," said Tom Graff, senior attorney with the Environmental Defense Fund in Oakland. "What's legally significant is what comes out down the line."

The CalFed plan targets the Delta, an aquatic maze that drains 40% of California's fresh water. Captured by giant pumps before it reaches San Francisco Bay and shipped hundreds of miles in canals, Delta water reaches 22 million people and 4 million acres of farmland.

Delta supplies have never been more critical nor more precarious as California expects to add 10 million new residents by 2020, and the state is overdue for drought after six years of abundant rain and snow.

The listing of several Delta fish under the U.S. Endangered Species Act in recent years has at the same time led to pumping restrictions that limit the delivery of Delta water to the Silicon Valley, San Joaquin Valley farms and Southern California cities.

Banking on the idea that healthier fish populations will mean fewer cutbacks in water supply, CalFed has earmarked $1 billion in state bond money, federal appropriations and water user fees to spend on restoring Central Valley rivers. Since its launch in 1996, the super-bureaucracy has already funded 195 different projects—from the removal of small dams to the installation of fish screens—worth $228 million.

Farmers have long complained that CalFed emphasizes environmental restoration over the expanded water supply that they see as critical, but Wednesday some agricultural representatives familiar with the latest CalFed blueprint found reason for hope.

"There's a lot of good stuff in there," said Jason Peltier, manager of the Central Valley Project Water Users Assn., which represents thousands of farmers who buy water from the nation's largest irrigation project, based in the Delta. "It's definitely a step forward. On its face, it's not nearly balanced, but there's a promise of balance."

Colo. water project nears go-ahead

Long-delayed proposal would fulfill promise to Utes, but environmental groups object

By Tom Kenworthy
USA TODAY

DURANGO, Colo. — This picturesque gateway to southern Colorado's San Juan Mountains has undergone a classic transformation from Old West to New West.

Founded as a railroad junction to serve the mining industry, it's now a mecca for mountain bikers, kayakers and tourists, who take a steam train to the old mining district.

In one key respect, the Old West hangs on in Durango. A decades-old plan to build a massive water project persists here at a time when environmentalism has made such projects passé throughout the region and rivers are viewed as better used for recreation.

Authorized by Congress in 1968, the Animas-La Plata (ALP) project has a long and checkered history. Conceived as a classic big dam project to provide subsidized irrigation water to farmers and ranchers, it has been derailed repeatedly by lawsuits, environmental reviews and endangered-species conflicts. However, it has found new life as a means to satisfy the water rights claims of Colorado's Ute Indians that date to the 19th century.

Slimmed to its essentials and backed by the Clinton administration, ALP is nearing another juncture. Rep. Scott McInnis, R-Colo., says Congress could approve the nearly $300 million project this year because "we have a package that all parties, except the fringes on both sides, can agree on."

However, environmental and taxpayer groups have dug in for a last stand against ALP. They portray it as an anachronistic boondoggle that will harm fish and wildlife and the recreation-based economy they say represents the future here in the Four Corners region.

They remain opposed despite massive changes in the project, which no longer includes an on-stream dam or irrigation water for farmers and ranchers. In its latest incarnation, Animas-La Plata's water would be reserved for municipal and industrial purposes, and most of that for the future needs of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes.

1,500-acre reservoir

The tribes' water rights date to 1868, the time of their treaty with the United States, which began a period when the tribes were stripped of millions of acres of western Colorado land. In a 1986 settlement agreement with the federal government, the tribes' water rights were quantified, and two years later, Congress directed that those claims be satisfied through the ALP water project.

Under the current plan, a pumping plant on the banks of the Animas River and within sight of downtown Durango would divert about 57,000 acre-feet of water a year from the river. The water would be pumped 500 feet uphill to a natural bowl known as Ridges Basin, where it would collect in a 1,500-acre reservoir created by a 217-foot high dam.

There, the water would sit, awaiting decisions on its use by the project's two main beneficiaries, the Ute tribes, and several recipients of smaller amounts, including the Navajo Nation and communities such as Durango and Farmington, N.M.

Though project opponents agree the Utes have clear rights to water in the region, they argue that:

- There is ample water available to satisfy regional growth needs for both Indian and non-Indian residents;
- Diversions from the Animas River would harm a blue ribbon trout fishery;
- The reservoir would injure a key state wildlife area, and that lower river flows would cripple a thriving rafting industry and kayaking center;
- Even though the tribes have sketched out possible uses, including a golf course and a coal-fired power plant, they have no firm, immediate plans for using the water.

'There are better options'

"Taxpayers are getting roped into a deal to build new golf courses and dude ranches," says Jill Lancelot, legislative director for Taxpayers for Common Sense, an advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. "There are better options out there that will meet tribal water needs at a much lower cost."

A coal-fired power plant would highlight the folly, says Michael Black of Taxpayers for the Animas River. "This is a seriously dumb project," he says. "You pump water uphill so you can dig coal to produce electricity so you can pump the water uphill."

Supporters of the project say that even without immediate plans to use the water, the Utes' water rights must be honored.

Sam Maynes, a Durango attorney, has worked on ALP for more than three decades and has represented the Southern Utes and local water districts for much of that time. He says that project opponents are no better than the Coloradans who ousted the Utes from millions of acres of their ancestral lands in the late 1800s.

"In 1880, they screwed them out of their land, and now they are going to screw them out of their water," Maynes says. "One hundred and twenty years ago it was the same argument: They don't need this land. Why don't these people understand about our trust responsibilities for the Indian tribes?"

In congressional testimony last month, Southern Ute Chairman John Baker said the ALP project "is the best and only way to provide the tribe with a water supply to meet its present and future needs." The U.S. government, he said, "promised that the tribe would have such a water supply in 1868 when it created the Ute reservation. It confirmed that promise in 1988 when it passed the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement Act. Now is the time for the United States to carry out those commitments."

Sensitive to charges they seek to deprive Indians of long-promised water, opponents insist there are alternatives that would honor commitments to the Utes without hurting the river. Their proposal: manage existing reservoirs more efficiently and buy land and water rights from willing sellers, at a cost of only $100 million.

"There's no water crisis in and around Durango," says Dylan Norton, a member of the San Juan Citizens Alliance, a local environmental group. "If you want to go out and buy water, you can do it. ... If it weren't for the Indian component, this wouldn't stand a chance."

Rafting outfitters, who carry 49,000 passengers a year, predict doom for their recreational industry. Though the latest environmental study projects a loss of only six days a year from river diversions, outfitters such as Robin Fritch, a partner in Flexible Flyers rafting company, say the impact would be much worse. "If (ALP) goes through, I think it will kill us," she says.

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Interior Secretary Babbit hopes to resolve Klamath Basin water wars

The Associated Press
4/18/00 3:55 AM

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. (AP) -- Seeing a chance to resolve competing demands for water between farmers and fish in the Klamath Basin, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt met Monday with irrigators, Indian tribes and fish and wildlife advocates.

With no public announcement he was coming, Babbitt toured the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuges just over the border in California and also talked with staff of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which is preparing a new plan for allocating water stored and distributed by the Klamath Project.

"I thought it was just time to get out there and talk to all the stakeholders -- the Indians, the farmers, environmentalits -- because there will be an environmental impact statement on the operation of the Klamath Project finished up probably by the end of the summer," Babbitt told The Associated Press.

The bureau has been struggling to meet the irrigation needs of farmers as well as court-ordered minimum levels for fish served by the series of reservoirs, canals and pumping stations that make up the Klamath Project. Some of the water even is pumped over the Cascade Range to serve the Rogue Valley.

In low water years, having enough water for endangered Lost River suckers and shortnosed suckers in Upper Klamath Lake and threatened coho salmon in the Klamath River has meant shutting off irrigation water to some of the potato, sugar beet and hay farmers in the basin.

Pressure is building from lawsuits filed by environmentalists and Indian tribes to assure enough water for protected fish. Biological opinions from government agencies are due this summer.

The bureau warned last week that it may have to shut off irrigation water to some farmers this year due to low amounts of rain and snowmelt, and the need to maintain water quality for fish protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Despite the competing demands, farmers, the Klamath Tribes and environmentalists have made strides in developing a cooperative approach to the water problems, which includes throwing their support behind the tribes' efforts to take back reservation lands that went into Winema National Forest.

"My impression, going through history and the water budgets, is we can find a win-win solution," Babbitt said. "There isn't a silver bullet here. There are going to be a lot of small changes to enable everybody to meet their expectations. I don't know what that combination is right now.

"I'm very sympathetic. There are a lot of good people in that valley. They've got pretty good relations with each other. I told them I would put in whatever amount of personal effort I could to try to bring it together."

Babbitt pledged to return to the Klamath Basin to continue trying to work things out.

NEWS SUMMARY
U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Communications
PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2000
Los Angeles Times

U.S. Drops Plans for Auburn Dam

■ **Environment:** Death of flood control project on California's North Fork of American River is a blow to Southern California water interests and GOP.

By TONY PERRY
and MARK GLADSTONE
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

In possibly the final chapter of one of the state's longest and ...st bitter water battles, the fed... government has bowed to ...te Atty. Gen. Bill Lockyer and all but dropped plans for a massive dam on a river in Northern California.

A decision announced this week by Lester A. Snow, regional director of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, could be the death knell for the long-stalled Auburn Dam project that would have provided flood control and helped send water to farmers on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley.

The decision is a victory for environmentalists, Democratic foes and Northern California interests that said the dam was too expensive, unduly destructive to the North Fork of the American River, and only served to encourage wasteful water use among Central Valley farmers and in sprawling Southern California.

And it is a defeat for Southern California water agencies and Republican proponents, including former Gov. Pete Wilson, who supported the Auburn Dam project, and Rep. John T. Doolittle (R-Rocklin), chairman of the House ...bcommittee on water and ...r.

In terms of sparking regional anger and conflict, the Auburn Dam project was second only to the proposal for a peripheral canal to bring Northern California water into the California Aqueduct by looping around the polluted Sacramento-San Joaquin delta.

"The Auburn Dam became a symbol of the deep mistrust that Northern California and the environmentalists feel for agriculture and Southern California," said Mark Watton, a member of the governing boards of the San Diego County Water Authority and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

But to environmentalists, the Auburn Dam project symbolized a discredited policy of solving the state's water needs by building dams and reservoirs and shipping ever more water from north to south rather than emphasizing conservation.

The Auburn Dam project was authorized in 1965 as a $426-million, 700-foot-tall dam about 37 miles north of Sacramento.

But congressional opposition in the 1970s called a halt to the early stages of the project. One reason was the rise of the environmental movement. Another was increased concern over earthquakes near the dam site after a 5.7 quake hit Oroville in 1975.

In 1992, the Bureau of Reclamation again submitted the project for congressional approval, this time reconfigured slightly as a flood-control project. Delays had driven the price tag to nearly $1 billion.

The House overwhelmingly voted not to fund the project, which left it in limbo.

Left behind was a half-mile tunnel that diverted water from the American River. Because of potential dangers, the federal government has banned recreational enthusiasts from a five-mile stretch upstream of the tunnel.

Snow has promised to plug the tunnel and return the river to its original course. While Snow's decision, which is supported by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, does not preclude resuming the project later, political reality suggests that the odds of that occurring are exceedingly remote.

Lockyer had threatened to sue the federal government over what he called the "needless, continuing environmental damage and impairment" to the North Fork, which serves as a watershed for Placer and El Dorado counties.

Nathan Barankin, spokesman for Lockyer, said the attorney general was "thrilled" that the public now will have full use of the American River.

"The tunnel was to facilitate a dam that was never built," Barankin said. "Water will now flow through the historic channel."

After decades of fighting the dam, Charles Casey, spokesman for Friends of the River, said his group and others will not be satisfied until the federal government declares the American River a "wild and scenic river," which would bar any revival of the Auburn Dam idea.

Watton said that, for the environmental movement, "the Auburn Dam can never be too dead. Even when it was pitched as a flood control project, their attitude was: We don't care if Sacramento is under 10 feet of water, we're against this dam."

While it may have been long forgotten in Southern California, the Auburn Dam project has remained a hot political issue in Northern California.

In 1998, San Diego businessman Darrell Issa, then seeking the GOP nomination for U.S. Senate, made an offhand comment to a Sacramento audience supporting the Auburn Dam and immediately was denounced by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), environmentalists and the editorial pages of Northern California newspapers.

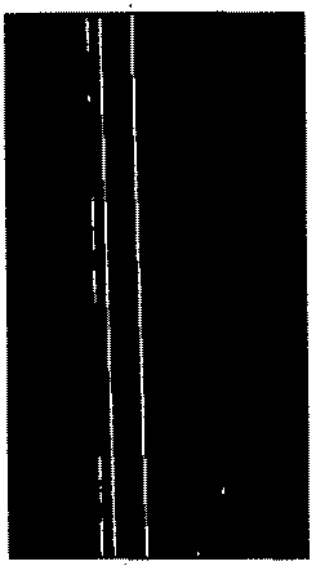
Snow estimated that closing the tunnel and restoring the channel could cost more than $50 million and suggested that the cost be split between the federal and state government. "We believe this is the most effective way to provide for the protection of the natural resources of the North Fork of the American River," Snow wrote.

Assemblyman Mike Machado (D-Stockton), chairman of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, said the dam is, at best, "a remote possibility" after this decision.

Machado said there are now other ways to meet California's water needs, projects that do not pose earthquake risks presented by the massive Auburn Dam.

"I've always supported the Auburn Dam because it would provide water resources . . . but we have to learn to be flexible," Machado said.

VOICES



BEE EDITORIALS

Water: Time to deal -- CalFed compromise depends on Davis and Babbitt

(Published March 12, 2000)

CalFed is the code name for the bureaucratic vehicle that drives Northern California's water solutions. It's basically a collection of all the folks who fight over water -- farmers, environmentalists, urbanites, more than a dozen government agencies -- thrown together into one feuding family led by agencies in Sacramento (Cal) and Washington (Fed).

CalFed at its surface offers a promising, contemporary edge. Through a remarkably public process, CalFed has sought compromises through facilitators, endless committee meetings and Internet sites offering technical analyses and virtual discussions of water operations. Scratch not far beneath the surface of the CalFed process, however, and the same old dysfunctional family continues to squabble. Consensus has remained elusive. But the siblings have managed to narrow their historic differences, and now it is time for the parents -- Gov. Gray Davis and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt -- to finish what CalFed has started.

CalFed's six-year quest for a smarter Northern California plumbing system is on schedule to unveil a "record of decision" this summer. The real deadline for Davis and Babbitt actually

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arrives within a few weeks, by which time they must devise a framework for the plan and begin a broader negotiating process to fine-tune the many details.

This is no small task -- a blueprint on how to proceed over the next 30 years to methodically and simultaneously improve the plight of humans and fish. The fundamental conflict is this: Salmon and steelhead need Northern California's waters to flow east to west, from the Sierra to San Francisco Bay. More than 20 million people need water to flow north to south though pumps, aqueducts and pipes that connect the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to as far away as San Diego.

CalFed's many participants haven't united behind a series of fixes, as some had hoped. But CalFed has produced a reasonably balanced menu of options: More reservoirs, above- and below-ground; more conservation; more transfers of supply between willing sellers and buyers; more river restoration; more ways to convey water within the Delta; and new water accounting methods to maintain a bank of supplies that can be released when needed for fish.

Picking from this menu is the political challenge for Babbitt and Davis. They must identify a sequence of projects that is both achievable politically and meaningful technically.

The culture of the water community isn't accustomed to compromise. The leaders must brace at first for more rhetoric than reason. Efforts will collapse if Davis and Babbitt don't solidly unite behind a strategy and then demonstrate the guts to weather the resulting storm. The deadline is looming. The clouds are building. Batten down the hatches. It is time for Davis and Babbitt to make some tough choices; their failure would drive CalFed straight into the swamp.

Problems? Suggestions? Let us hear from you.

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NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063

MAR - 7 2000

MOBILE REGISTER

BABBITT VOWS HELP TO PROTECT DELTA

Acquisition of Delta land is "a fabulous story. What I'm going to do is take this back to Washington and I'm going to say to Congress, 'There are some good things going on in this country'" for conservation. *-Bruce Babbitt*
"There's something big, something really important, going on in this Delta. This is the best and most intact delta system that I've seen in North America." ***Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt Babbitt vows federal effortsto help restore, preserve Delta*** **By DANIEL CUSICK**
Staff Reporter

's hard to impress Bruce Babbitt with wilderness. In ght years as U.S. interior secretary, he has seen virtually all of the nation's premier wildlands, from western mountain peaks to the vast Florida Everglades.

But on Monday, splashed in warm spring sunlight, it was the Mobile-Tensaw Delta that caught the eye of the nation's top conservation official, who pledged his agency's resources to help restore and preserve it.

"There's something big, something really important, going on in this Delta," Babbitt told a gathering of public officials, media and other dignitaries on board the paddlewheeler Cotton Blossom before departing on a two-hour tour of the Tensaw River bottomlands near Stockton.

The Delta, a 35-mile long maze of rivers, swamps and marshes separating Mobile and Baldwin counties, won high praise from a man who has paddled Alaska's Yukon territory and fished for bass in the Mississippi River basin.

This," he said "is the best and most intact delta system that I've seen in North America."

The interior secretary said he was frankly surprised that a place of such size and stature could be so little known around the country. "It really is a well-kept secret," he said.

More than praise the Delta, however, Babbitt said he will use his office to help save the region, which funnels almost all of Alabama's upstate waters into Mobile Bay and is home to hundreds of bird and fish species.

Babbitt's visit was designed to give momentum to a state conservation effort that started 10 months ago, when the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources bought nearly 48,000 acres of Delta bottomlands from Kimberly-Clark Corp. It was one of the largest conservation purchases in state history. The $20 million deal turned heads all across the country, including those of national leaders who saw a model partnership in Alabama between state government and private conservation groups.

"It's a fabulous story," Babbitt said of the acquisition, which was jointly financed by the state's Forever Wild Land Trust and a trio of private groups - the Alabama Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy. "What I'm going to do is take this back to Washington and I'm going to say to Congress, 'There are some good things going on in this country'" for conservation.

Babbitt said the state should continue to buy sensitive land in the Delta, but it also should tackle other projects, such as elevating parts of the U.S. 90 Causeway to improve water exchange between the Delta and Mobile Bay. He also recommended more aggressive programs to prevent unregulated pollutants like dirt, farm fertilizers and household chemicals from entering the watershed.

The Delta, considered by scientists to be one of the most productive estuaries on the continent, is threatened by a variety of human activities and impediments, including logging, wastewater discharges, upstream dams and development within the watershed.

Babbitt, who spent Sunday night at the Washington Babbitt, who spent Sunday night at the Washington County hunting lodge of state Conservation Commissioner Riley Boykin Smith after attending the 35th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery Civil Rights march, took an early morning bird's-eye tour of the Delta by helicopter with Gov. Don Siegelman other officials.

While flying above the region, Siegelman pointed out some of the Delta's key assets and problems.

"We discussed the region's timber history, its navigation history, its petrochemical development history and other things," Babbitt said of the fly-over.

"It didn't take him but a second to see what the problems are," Siegelman said.

For instance, Babbitt took strong interest in the Causeway and "the obvious need to take out what is essentially a man-made dam" that separates the Delta from the Bay, Siegelman said. The governor said the state will soon begin work on a program to elevate portions of the Causeway to ease the tidal flow of water between the rivers and the sea.

A Mobile-based group called the Scenic Causeway Coalition is already working to build support and funding for such a project, an effort that could build steam with state and federal help. Babbitt said he plans to research the Causeway issue over the next few days so he can make recommendations to the governor's office about research and funding possibilities.

Babbitt also weighed in on the dispute over the Alabama Sturgeon, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed for addition to the federal Endangered Species List. Babbitt said he was satisfied with a recent conservation agreement that will allocate more money toward capturing and breeding sturgeon at the state's Marion Fish Hatchery. As for the listing itself, Babbitt said he did not have a strong position.

"I could argue round or flat on that," he said.

Before the Cotton Blossom docked at Stockton's Lower Bryant Landing, Babbitt and Siegelman departed together in an Alabama Marine Police vessel, catching a last glimpse of the bottomland forests that brought the interior secretary to lower Alabama.

Babbitt, wind-blown and looking a little sunburned, left the «77 guests on an upbeat note, reassuring them that the state's massive purchase was a worthwhile effort.

"It was a good visit," said Rebecca Pritchett, a Montgomery attorney and board member of Forever Wild and the Alabama Wildlife Federation. "I think he realizes that we're doing something right."

Babbitt puffs a bit, sees two dams gone

Gorton says there is money for only one

Friday, February 11, 2000

By JOEL CONNELLY
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER
NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT

Secretary Bruce Babbitt will travel to Glines Canyon Dam on the Elwha River today, heralding what his department calls "a final consensus agreement" to remove the two dams that block migration of salmon up the Olympic Peninsula river.

"We're coming in the process to where the dams are coming out. We're still dickering around on details but I am referring to 'dams' as plural," Babbitt said in an interview.

But Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., noted that Congress has only appropriated money to remove one dam and several years may pass before the fate of the second is decided.

"No, there is no agreement on the Glines Canyon Dam," Gorton said. Gorton is listed by the Interior Department as among those attending the settlement ceremony, but he said yesterday he won't be going. Neither will Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who also had been listed by the Interior Department as attending.

Babbitt still will have much to celebrate on his visit.

The federal government is buying the two dams. An agreement is in place to build a water filtration plant for Port Angeles, and the Daishowa America mill there will get power to replace that lost when the first dam comes down.

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Under a plan originated by the Elwha Citizens Action Group of Port Angeles, the lower Elwha Dam will be taken down first. If results for salmon are positive, the higher Glines Canyon Dam -- in Olympic National Park -- could be removed.

"I would hope we will proceed as soon as possible with deconstruction of the second dam," said Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash. "We will have to work with Sen. Gorton on the pace."

Gorton is chairman of the Senate Interior appropriations subcommittee, which controls the Interior Department's budget.

He has long voiced skepticism about the cost and benefits of removing the Elwha River dams.

At one point, Gorton held up money for the Elwha project in a bid to force the Clinton administration to pledge that it would not unilaterally try to remove federal dams from the Columbia and Snake rivers. He later agreed to separate the issues.

The dams were built, without fish ladders, more than 70 years ago. Blocking nearly 50 miles of river spawning habitat, they virtually eliminated big runs of pink and chinook salmon.

Interior Department studies have concluded that if both dams were removed, 10 historic runs of salmon and steelhead could be restored. More than 100,000 salmon would return to the Elwha River each year, a 25-fold increase over the river's current fishery.

The department has listed numerous additional species, notably black bears, eagles and osprey, that would benefit from salmon restoration. The 230-square-mile Elwha watershed is largely pristine and within the national park.

Since first traveling to the Olympic Peninsula in 1993, Babbitt has insisted that the Elwha River represents a landmark opportunity for river restoration. He has volunteered to push the plunger when the first dam is blown up.

But restoration of the river is likely to take as long as 10 years, Dicks said yesterday.

The Interior Department has put a $122 million price tag on removing the dams, replacing the power and assuring Port Angeles' water supply

So far, Congress has appropriated $52 million -- $29.5 million for dam acquisition and $22 million in the current fiscal year budget to begin river restoration. President Clinton has asked for an additional $15 million in the budget he proposed to Congress earlier this week.

The longer the process, however, the more expensive it will be to take down the Glines Canyon Dam. A 10-year delay would push up the cost to $160 million, the Interior Department has estimated.

Dicks and Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Wash., will join Babbitt today. But Murray is passing up the event to appear at an Al Gore press conference that will counter today's Seattle appearance by Bill Bradley, Gore's rival for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Babbitt and Gorton have circled each other warily during the Elwha process. Although they have often clashed on environmental issues, they are old friends from days when both were state attorneys general.

"Whatever my disagreements with Secretary Babbitt, when he gives me his word he will do something, he does it," Gorton said yesterday.

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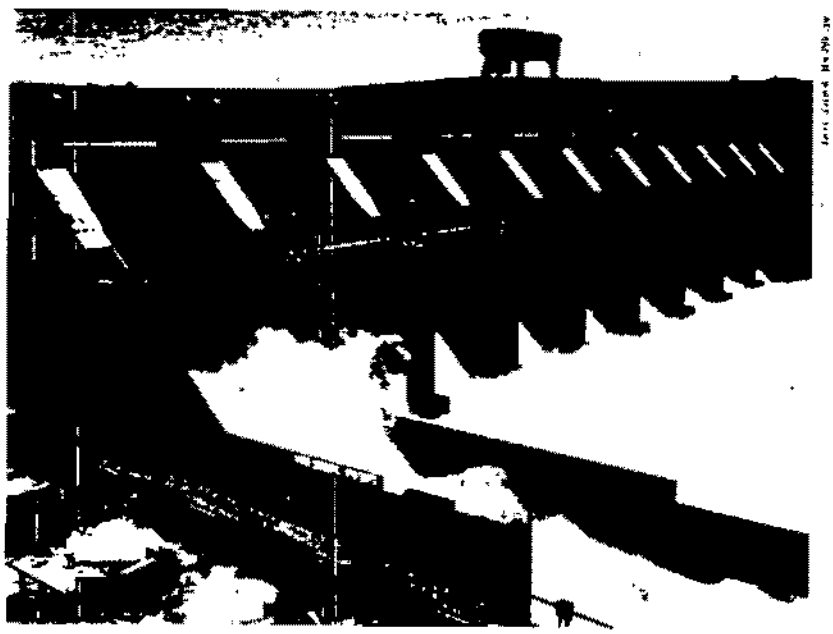
NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior — Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063 — THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2000

National Journal

Showdown at Snake River



BY MARGARET KRIZ ■

HOW FAR WILL POLICY BEND TO SAVE THE SALMON?

These days, folks in the Pacific Northwest may be excused if they're experiencing a little déjà vu. Just a decade ago, a federal judge ruled that regulators weren't doing enough to protect the northern spotted owl and halted logging in the Northwest's old-growth forests. The conflict was rooted in the 1973 Endangered Species Act, which requires federal regulators to prevent any animal or plant from becoming extinct, no matter what the cost.

Today, another crisis is brewing in the region, this one centered on the salmon, whose abundance was lauded in the early 19th century by explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. In the past 50 years, the fish populations in the Columbia River basin have plummeted from 16 million salmon and steelhead trout to only 1 million. Federal regulators have listed 18 Pacific Northwest populations of salmon and steelhead trout as endangered or threatened, and therefore in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Bringing salmon back from the brink of extinction is far trickier than protecting the owl. In the past 50 years, many

National Journal

of the free-flowing rivers and streams in which salmon thrived have been dammed, and massive quantities of water have been diverted for irrigation. Logging, grazing, mining, and development along the rivers have damaged fish habitats. *(For more about the lifecycle of salmon, see box).*

Despite the federal government's expenditure of $3 billion to help save the fish, its populations continue to decline. Scientists warn that if more-dramatic action isn't taken, many of the salmon runs could disappear in the next decade. "The big question is, with a wide-ranging species like salmon that lives where we live, are we going to do what's necessary to recover the species?" asked Curt Smitch, the chairman of Democratic Gov. Gary Locke's salmon recovery office in Washington state.

In 1994, U.S. District Judge Malcolm Marsh scolded the National Marine Fisheries Service, which is responsible for preserving the fish, for not doing enough to protect three species on the Snake River in southeastern Washington state: the spring and summer chinook, the fall chinook, and the steelhead trout. Marsh told regulators to develop a plan to preserve the fish.

Tribal leaders, environmentalists, and a growing number of scientists argue that the obvious solution to the Snake River problem is to breach the river's four dams by tearing down the earthen berms surrounding the dams and diverting the river around the concrete structures. The Snake River dams, built in the 1960s and 1970s, have transformed the once-wild river into a series of slack-water pools inhospitable to the salmon. The dams chew up or injure baby salmon migrating to the ocean and make it difficult for the adult fish to return to their spawning grounds. But dam breaching, which would cost roughly $1 billion, is fiercely opposed by the businesses that depend on the inland river to transport grain, irrigate farms, and produce cheap electricity. Those economic interests have the backing of powerful Republicans in Congress, most notably Sen. Slade Gorton of Washington, who chairs the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee.

In November, the salmon conflict was further complicated when a group of nine federal agencies issued a report stating that it might not be necessary to breach the dams if the region is willing to take a variety of other dramatic and potentially expensive steps to improve conditions for the salmon throughout its lifecycle. Among these options are limiting land use along the river and limiting the diversion of irrigation water. In December, regulators announced plans to ask residents of the Pacific Northwest to choose actions they're willing to take to save the salmon. The National Marine Fisheries Service has scheduled a series of hearings, beginning in February, on the Snake River salmon runs.

Those two moves have sparked what some are describing as "a regional civil war" among the Pacific Northwest industries that could be asked to invest more money and effort than they already have to preserve the salmon. "The forest-products industry in Oregon and Washington has already stepped up to the plate," objected Chris West, the vice president of the Northwest Forestry Association in Portland, Ore. "We feel we're being asked to give more and more so that other parts of the equation can continue their status quo."

And the conflict will only get worse.

The salmon preservation options listed in the November report are designed only to save the Snake River salmon from extinction. Under the Endangered Species Act, however, the government is required to rebuild the fish's flagging populations to pre-dam levels. That will require vastly more expensive action. The National Marine Fisheries Service is in the preliminary stages of selecting scientists to write the salmon recovery plan.

All this is likely to mean more delay, which is bad news

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for the fish, noted Eric Black, salmon adviser for Oregon Democratic Gov. John A. Kitzhaber. "Scientists from all quarters are telling us that delay means that some of these fish are going to go extinct."

The Players and Politics

In 1994, Judge Marsh, a President Reagan appointee, handed down a scathing opinion charging that the National Marine Fisheries Service had badly erred in 1993 when it approved a modest Army Corps of Engineers plan for operating the Snake River dams. Marsh ordered the service to make a "major overhaul" to guarantee that the hydropower system is more salmon-friendly. "Instead of looking for what can be done to protect the species from jeopardy, the NMFS and the action agencies have narrowly focused their attention on what the establishment is capable of handling with minimal disruption," he wrote. Marsh gave the regulators until the end of 1999 to come up with a comprehensive solution to the salmon dilemma. That deadline has since been extended to April, the month when the Snake River spring chinook salmon begin their migration to the ocean.

So far, the Clinton administration has come up with a series of conflicting scientific studies and research papers on preserving the salmon, and no firm recommendations. According to Will Stelle, the Fisheries Service's Northwest regional director, the final decision on how—or whether—to continue operating the Snake River dams will be released on schedule in April.

Stelle said he's enlisting the help of state governments and local residents to decide the future of the fish, which will affect the future of the Pacific Northwest. "We're saying to the region, here are some of the choices that need to be made. Are you prepared to make changes in the way you manage the land and water resources to make salmon recovery successful?" Stelle said. "Because if the answer is no, then it doesn't matter what we do with the Snake River dams."

Environmental activists, fishing groups, and American Indian tribes are pushing the Clinton administration to settle the matter. They note that shortly after taking office in 1993, President Clinton held a Northwest forest summit, which resulted in a landmark compromise that reduced logging in the region and provided economic aid to timber-dependent communities. But so far, Clinton has said little about salmon.

Many in the Pacific Northwest view the Fisheries Service's recent actions as a way to delay making any difficult decisions on salmon preservation. "The idea of putting all these options on the table and having hearings puts it beyond the 2000 elections," said Glen Spain, the Northwest regional director for the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, a Eugene, Ore., commercial fishing trade group. Environmental [illegible] tools of 'lacking the guts' to take a stand on [illegible] fish. 'NMFS' job is to tell us biologically what [illegible] not what's politically acceptable, not what's palatable," said Chris Zimmer, a spokesman for Save Our Wild Salmon, a Seattle-based coalition of environmental groups, fishing associations, and American Indian tribes.

Last fall, the Green groups took their case to the public in a series of full-page advertisements in several major newspapers. Criticizing the White House inaction, the environmental advocates urged the public to contact Vice President Al Gore. Gore responded to the environmentalists' demands by offering to hold a salmon summit—*if* he is elected president.

The environmentalists hope to make the Snake River salmon a presidential campaign issue because preservation of the fish affects California, Oregon, and Washington—three states with a total of 72 electoral votes. But so far, only one presidential candidate has taken a stand on the salmon: Republican Gov. George W. Bush of Texas said in July that he opposes breaching the dams.

Bush's comments mirror those of conservative Republicans in the Pacific Northwest. Most of the region's Democratic lawmakers, wary of the potential economic downside of breaching, are taking a wait-and-see approach. Only a handful of Democrats, most notably Oregon's Gov. Kitzhaber, have acknowledged scientific reports that show breaching the dams would be beneficial for the salmon, although he's hoping less drastic action will suffice to help the fish recover. In October, the politics of the salmon dispute took an unexpected turn when Alaska Democratic Gov. Tony Knowles demanded that regulators tear down the dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers. In a letter to Govs. Kitzhaber and Locke, Knowles protested that the dams are "a killing field" that is wiping out the vast majority of the wild chinook salmon, which would otherwise migrate to Alaska.

Triggering Knowles' anger were proposals to dramatically limit Alaska fishermen's local salmon catches—a step many say is needed to protect the few endangered salmon that are mixed in with the other species. Last fall, Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, tried to block any Alaska fishing restrictions. Stevens drew up a spending bill rider that would have exempted all salmon in Alaskan waters from the Endangered Species Act. The rider was ultimately unsuccessful, but served notice that Alaska plans to be a player in the Pacific Northwest salmon debate.

Should the Dams Be Breached?

Sen. Gorton's solution to the salmon standoff is to overhaul the Endangered Species Act. He recommends requiring federal regulators to balance environmental interests with the economic health of the region when they decide whether to extend federal protection to salmon. Current-

[illegible] species are ranked as threatened or endangered [illegible] the worst biological conditions. Local economies are considered, however, when regulators decide how to help the species recover.

"Fundamentally, the Endangered Species Act asks the wrong questions," Gorton argued. "If the only question is, 'Does removing the dams on the Snake River increase the chances of survival of some of these endangered runs of salmon,' the answer is probably a qualified yes. But the ultimate question that society has to decide is how it balances the multiple uses of the river," he said. "My ultimate goal is to see to it that all of those interests could be considered in balanced fashion in coming up with a solution, largely a solution created here in the Pacific Northwest."

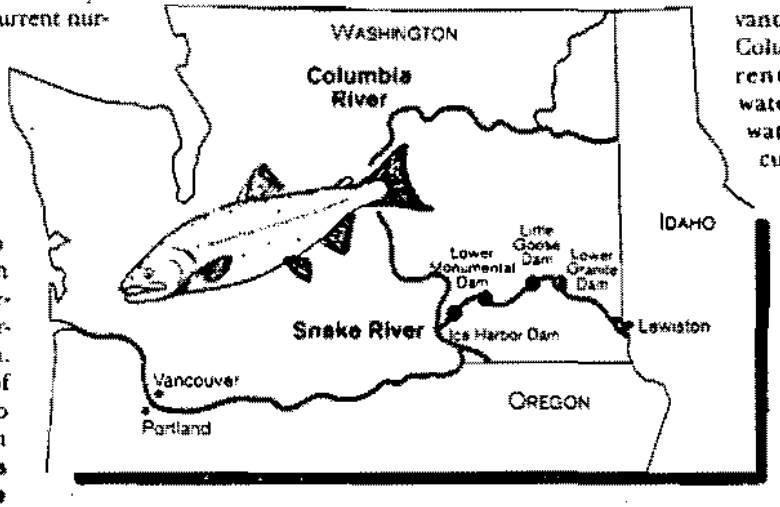
Not surprisingly, Gorton's proposal to overhaul the Endangered Species Act has its share of critics. Smith of Washington Gov. Locke's office said that such radical changes "would ensure that we would never protect a species. If you put the economic interests on the table at the same time as the species, the species will always lose," he said. "That argument is a way of saying we don't want to make any hard decisions anymore."

Among the economic benefits that Gorton and other conservative Republicans want included in the salmon equation is the value of the Snake River's barging business. The dams converted Lewiston, Idaho, located 465 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, into an international seaport. Idaho farmers rely on the port to ship 4.5 million tons of wheat and barley each year at rates half those charged by railroads. Eliminating the barges would require major investment in the region's roads and railroad infrastructure to accommodate the grain shipments and would raise transportation costs for farmers. Snake River water has also been diverted to irrigate Idaho's desert regions to allow production of sugar beets and other water-dependent crops.

The biggest beneficiaries of the dams, however, are the

THE SALMON LIFE-CYCLE

The life of the Pacific Northwest chinook salmon begins in the gravel beds of their home streams, where oxygen carried by the fast-moving current nurtures the eggs deposited by spawning females. Salmon hatchlings dart under the gravel in search of food in the cool, fresh water before beginning their journey downstream. Different runs of salmon migrate to the Pacific Ocean at different times of the year. As the salmon approach the ocean, they undergo a remarkable physical metamorphosis that allows them to survive in the saltwater habitat.



Once in the Pacific, the young salmon hug the coastline as they travel north to Canada and Alaska. These voyagers, who feed on herring, squid, and other fish, can cover thousands of miles over the course of three years. Once they reach their adult size—an average of 30 pounds—the fish return to their natal streams to reproduce. En route, they undergo a second transformation that allows them to live in fresh water. Chinook salmon spawn only once during their lifetimes, but other salmonlike fish, mainly steelhead trout, can reproduce several times. Most salmon die within a week of spawning.

Today, man is disrupting the salmon's rigorous life-cycle at nearly every stage of the journey along the Snake and Columbia rivers. Logging, ranching, farming, and urban development along the streams can cause the riverbeds to fill with silt and pollution that can kill the eggs. Those activities also eliminate the shady stream cover sought by the young fish.

Dams built to take advantage of the Snake and Columbia rivers' swift currents have slowed the waterways, increased the water temperature, and cut the amount of oxygen in the rivers. The dams also block migratory routes, a problem that federal engineers have tried to overcome by transporting the young salmon around the dams. Some scientists argue, however, that the fish are often injured in transport and then are less likely to survive in the rigorous ocean conditions. Dams also block adult fish seeking to return to their native streams. Engineers have attempted to solve that problem by constructing fish ladders at the dam sites.

Pollution in the briny estuaries harms the fish as they migrate from and return to their native streams. Aggressive sport and commercial fishing in the Pacific Northwest also takes a toll on the fish population.

aluminum companies and wheat farms that have flocked to the Northwest to take advantage of the cheap power they make possible. Although the four Snake River dams produce only 5 percent of the region's electrical power, breaching them could mean higher electricity bills for all Northwest businesses. Even homeowners would see a $1 to $5 per month increase in their bills if the dams are breached, according to federal regulators.

Privately, some Northwest business owners who benefit from the dams question whether the feds should save the fish. "This nation made decisions 10 and 20 years ago that precluded some of the coexistence that they're trying to adopt now," said an Idaho businessman. "Now they're trying to shove this down Idaho's and Washington's throats. But I don't see them talking about stocking the Los Angeles rivers with salmon or putting the wolves back into Central Park."

Meanwhile, environmental groups and commercial and sport fishermen say that Gorton and others are ignoring the economic windfall the region would enjoy if the dams were breached. Railroads and trucking companies would be clear winners. Construction and engineering companies would be in demand to help build the new infrastructure. According to the environmentalists' studies, a free-flowing Snake River would attract world-class anglers, kayakers, rafters, and canoers.

But perhaps the biggest winners would be the Native American tribes, whose cultures and economies are based on the salmon. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission estimates that tribal chinook harvests could double within 25 years if the dams are breached. "A diverse salmon-based economy can be as strong as or stronger than the heavily subsidized artificial economy that the dam system has created," argued commission spokesman Charles Hudson.

Regional Solutions

In mid-December, the National Marine Fisheries Service issued a proposal that would give state and local governments a lead role in protecting endangered salmon runs. Under that plan, any business or landowner complying with state endangered species protection laws would automatically be in compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act.

The proposed rule was evidence that the states, particularly Oregon and Washington, are actively improving their own salmon habitats. Republican Gov. Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho is also close to unveiling a program for aiding the salmon. "We all believe that there should be a regional solution to this problem, not a command-and-control approach from Washington, D.C.," Kempthorne said in an interview. In Washington state, for example, regulators successfully hammered out an agreement with timber industry executives that required [illegible] along local salmon streams.

According to the Fisheries Service's scale, the state's progress on improving habitats could go a long way toward helping the fish. "One of the strongest correlations in salmon problems and remedies is freshwater habitat," he said. "The place we could be most productive in rebuilding salmon runs is rebuilding the productivity of the freshwater streams and rivers upon which they depend. The science shows that's where you get the biggest bang for the buck."

State officials, however, are concerned that the Fisheries Service's recent reports give them precious little direction in protecting the salmon. "If we don't breach the dams, NMFS says that to give the spring and summer chinook a fighting chance we would need to engage in habitat restoration work that would increase their survival rate by 32 percent in their first year," noted Block of the Oregon governor's office. "But they don't say how to do that, and we don't know how much it would cost." In fact, the options paper released by federal regulators offers only sketchy ideas of how salmon would be protected if the Snake River dams are not breached.

Ironically, while the Fisheries Service pushes for improvements in river habitats and estuaries, the Army Corps of Engineers is advancing a plan to deepen 100 miles of the Columbia River shipping channel through which the salmon travel. The aim is to allow larger freighters to get from the Pacific Ocean to seaports in Portland, Ore., and Vancouver, Wash. In December, the Fisheries Service approved the $196 million project, but required the Corps to restore more than 3,000 acres of tidal wetlands in that region.

Opponents of the dredging operation complain that the project will release toxic sediment now sitting at the bottom of the Portland harbor, cause salt water to intrude farther into the Columbia, and hurt the salmon's food supply. Justin Hayes, the associate director for public policy for American Rivers, said the benefits of the project aren't sufficient to compensate for the damage that will be caused by the dredging. "They're going to allow immediate negative impacts to salmon on the promise that we will make some improvements in 20 years," he said, predicting that environmental advocates will go to the courts to stop the project.

If the dams are not breached, the federal report also suggests that regulators may need to increase the amount of water flowing through the Snake River system to help carry the baby salmon to the ocean. To increase the river current, officials have said they might need to divert perhaps as much as 1 million acre feet of irrigation water that's now used by Idaho farmers.

Little wonder that Idaho government officials strongly oppose that proposal, as well as dam breaching. "These are two options that would have such significant economic disruption and that have such a low level of support

among the public that Idaho think they are politically feasible at this time," said Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Fisheries, Wildlife, and Drinking Water Subcommittee.

If the dams are left standing, the simplest yet most controversial proposal to help the salmon is to dramatically reduce the quantity of fish that commercial, sport, and tribal fishermen are allowed to take from the Columbia and Snake rivers. Northwest dam-dependent businesses and logging and agriculture groups are pushing fishing restrictions, but these would impinge on the treaty rights of the tribes along the Snake River.

American Indian groups complain that in the 1970s, they agreed to stop fishing for spring and summer chinook salmon in an attempt to help those populations recover, but to no avail. "Our tribes were told, if our Indians stop fishing for five years, you'll be able to walk across the backs of the river on these fish," said Hudson of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. "Well, we quit fishing for 22 years and the fish are not coming back. So it's very much a contentious point to suggest that if the tribes quit fishing, everything's going to be better."

If regulators impose harvest restrictions on the fall chinook salmon, tribal leaders say they will sue the federal government for breaching their tribal rights. "We are perilously close to our tribal cultures' becoming non-fish cultures," Hudson said. "This will be the line in the sand that there's nothing left to give."

If the tribes are successful, such a suit could be expensive for U.S. taxpayers. In a similar suit, the Skokomish tribe in Washington is seeking $5.8 billion from the federal government and the city of Tacoma. The tribe charges that a local hydropower project caused economic and culture damages and violated its treaty rights.

Testing Public Resolve

If the Fisheries Service does not base its Snake River salmon plan solely on well-documented science, environmentalists are certain to challenge the decision in federal court, said Heather Weiner, senior legislative counsel for Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, which handles lawsuits for environmental groups. If the court finds that the new plan is inadequate, a federal judge could seek to protect the salmon by cracking down on economic activities that affect the dwindling Snake River salmon populations. However, the court is unlikely to order regulators to tear down the Snake River dams, which would require congressional action.

The environmental community is already proving that it is serious about taking the Snake River salmon issue to the courts. The Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund is planning to sue the Bureau of Reclamation in mid-January, arguing that much of southern Idaho's irrigation water should be diverted to the Snake River to increase the waterway's current and aid the endangered salmon. Environmentalists recently settled a separate lawsuit, which has led to cleaner water being poured into the Snake River from the Potlatch Corp. pulp and paper mill in Lewiston, Idaho, that was impeding fish migrating upstream into Idaho. That suit, filed under the 1972 Clean Water Act, was settled when the Environmental Protection Agency required Potlatch to lower the temperature of its water discharges.

While the environmental community contemplates legal action, the Clinton administration has been putting out mixed signals on dam removal. At a Dec. 17 press conference, Anne Badgley, the Northwest regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, called dam breaching "a no-brainer . . . . A free flowing river is better than a dammed river" for the health of the salmon, she said. A National Marine Fisheries Service written assessment also concluded that "dam removal is the only single management option likely to improve all populations of salmon under all assumptions."

But the Fisheries Service's Stelle has been far more circumspect. "We're considering a comprehensive solution—how you operate the hydropower system, its flows, reservoir operations, all of it," he said. "It's not just breaching the dams."

In the end, a final decision on the fate of the dams could be in the hands of Commerce Secretary William M. Daley, in whose department the Fisheries Service is located, and George Frampton, the acting head of the White House Council on Economic Quality.

Many see the fate of the Snake River salmon as a harbinger of the nation's willingness and ability to save dozens of other fish runs that are nearing obliteration. Concerns about other dwindling fish populations could affect the fate of hundreds of Pacific Northwest dams that are up for renewal in the next five years. In fact, the role of hydropower, which was instrumental in developing the region, is being seriously reconsidered. Once viewed as a clean, environmentally friendly source of energy, hydropower is on its way out in many regions of the country where dams are being breached to help preserve wildlife.

The complexities of the Snake River salmon story also raise new questions for the Endangered Species Act. "We know what's causing the salmon to go extinct," said Smitch of Washington state's salmon recovery office. "But there simply hasn't been the political will to deal with it. And frankly, if it were not for the Endangered Species Act, we would not be doing it now."

Smitch said today's debate on the future of the salmon will test the public's resolve to put the preservation of natural resources above the almighty dollar. "This may test whether or not we have an Endangered Species Act over time," he said. "Did we really mean it when we said we shouldn't let a species check out? That's what we're put here on the table now." ■

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