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January 19, 2006

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Zone 7 Board Supports New Approach to Delta Management

Proposed Agreement Would Maintain Quality and Reliability of Valley's Primary Water Supply

Livermore – The Zone 7 Board of Directors last night adopted CALFED's new Proposed Statement of Principles, helping to move California one step further towards a comprehensive new approach to managing the Sacramento-San Joaquin-San Francisco Bay-Delta (Delta) that will maintain imported source water quality and ensure a reliable water supply—two of Zone 7's top priorities.

Zone 7 receives up to 75% of its annual drinking water supply from the Delta, emphasizing the importance of the agency's ongoing involvement in protecting this vital resource. “A healthy Delta ecosystem is vital in maintaining the quality and reliability of our imported water supplies”, said John Greci, Zone 7 Board President.

CALFED, the joint state and federal partnership responsible for managing the Delta, was designed to reduce conflicts over limited water supplies and to find a balance between the issues of water supply, water quality, ecosystem restoration, and levee system integrity. CALFED has come under recent scrutiny amongst concerns that the agency has been too unfocused and has not been accomplishing its original purposes.

The Statement of Principles is intended to refocus and direct CALFED's efforts, and to provide adequate project financing over the next two years. Participating organizations must present the Principles to their governing Boards for approval by January 31, 2006.

A major component of the Principles is the development of voluntary habitat conservation plans (HCP) for the recovery of key species in the Delta. One or more HCPs could be developed that would provide regulatory assurances for water delivery projects over the next 40 years. This approach is aimed to focus environmental studies and restoration activities in

a manner that acknowledges the management of the Delta as the state's major water supply source. The Delta supplies water to 22 million residents and businesses in the Bay Area and Southern California.

Restoration activities over the next two years will be funded by the State Water Project (SWP) and the Central Valley Project (CVP). Half of this funding is expected to come from new money above and beyond existing, ongoing obligations of SWP and CVP water users. Zone 7's total contributions are estimated to be about \$200,000 - \$300,000 per year—half of which would be paid through the treated and untreated water rate. Funds earmarked specifically for the Species Recovery Fund would be credited against future obligations for ecosystem restoration. Long-term funding would be negotiated in the future.

To date, eighteen organizations have approved the document, including state and federal agencies, water suppliers, export interests, and in-Delta and upstream interests. The HCP approach will have the added benefit of better focusing species recovery efforts and encouraging first-time participation by water agencies throughout the watershed. The Principles would also accommodate the addition of new participants over time.

The CALFED Record of Decision (ROD) was jointly adopted and signed by 13 state and federal agencies in August, 2000. In the ROD, the agencies formally agreed to work together towards achieving balanced improvements within the Delta in the four program areas. In 2003 the California Bay-Delta Authority was established as the central governance structure for the CALFED program and its projects.

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Zone 7 Water Agency is one of the 10 active zones of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The District was established by the State Legislature in October 1949 to solve problems of flooding, drainage, channel erosion and water supply and conservation in Alameda County. A seven-member board of directors governs Zone 7. Along with flood control, Zone 7 supplies water to all of eastern Alameda County and a population of more than 183,000. Treated water is sold wholesale to local retailers, including the cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, the Dublin San Ramon Services District, and the California Water Service Company. Zone 7 also distributes untreated water to local agriculture operations and golf courses.