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My name is Elizabeth Parkhurst, and I am speaking tonight as a concerned citizen who cares about the environment.

All to often, our solution to any problem is to build bigger and buy more. Our knee jerk reaction is to look outside ourselves for a short-term solution. We rarely spend time examining how changing our habits might solve the problem.

Such is the case with CALFED's proposal. To ensure that agribusiness has a cheap, subsidized supply of water, CALFED proposes to build as many as 12 new dams or reservoirs throughout the state.

I have two problems with this approach. First, dams are a major cause of degraded rivers systems and water quality. They are a short-term fix to a larger problem. Second, we need to seriously examine how we spend public resources; we should use money prudently, to bring about long-term solutions not only to problems of agribusiness, but ensuring long-term solutions to protecting the environment. Our guiding principle should focus on "doing these least damage."

Conservation programs, in contrast, require that we examine how we as individuals are part of the solution to the problem. Conservation programs do not damage the environment, problems that future generations will have to mitigate. Conversation programs do not spend public resources, saving those resources for other public problems.

I urge you to invest in Conversation programs: they are long-term solutions to the issues before you.

Elizabeth Parkhurst