



For Immediate Release

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Water Commissioners Make Public Benefit Score Determination: Statement from Sites Project Authority Chairman Fritz Durst

Eligible Funding for Sites Project Increases to \$1 Billion

Maxwell, CA – In a series of public meetings last week the California Water Commission considered staff recommended public benefit scores for applicants seeking Proposition 1 funding for new storage projects. The Commission voted to increase the public benefit score for the Sites Project, bringing the total eligible state funding up to \$1 billion. Sites Project Authority (Authority) Chairman Fritz Durst released this statement regarding the Water Commission’s decision:

“Although the Sites Project Authority appreciates the increase in eligible state funding, we remain firm in our belief that the state is missing a significant opportunity to flexibly manage water for the benefit of endangered salmon. We are disappointed that the process was not more collaborative and resulted in an undervaluing of the benefits Sites provides to struggling salmon populations.”

“We appreciate the effort by Commissioners to evaluate the public benefits Proposition 1 applicants provide to the State of California. We will continue working with the Commission and staff to finalize the scoring process and secure early funding later this summer to continue to advance this critical water storage project.”

“The Sites Project is an important new water management tool that will help improve environmental conditions in the Sacramento River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta while also securing water supplies for California homes, farms and businesses. Sites will be especially beneficial during inevitable future drought conditions. The Authority will work with our project partners from across California to finalize project planning and build Sites Reservoir.”

The public benefit score represents 33 percent of the overall Water Commission scoring and represents each applicant’s contribution to ecosystem, water quality, flood control, emergency response and recreational improvements. In February, the Sites Reservoir Project received initial public benefit credit for Delta smelt, wildlife refuge improvements, flood control, and recreation. But, Water Commission staff requested more information in order to determine the project’s environmental benefits for salmon. Last week, Senator Feinstein and Congressman Garamendi sent a [letter](#) to the Water Commission expressing concern over limited acknowledgement of salmon benefits and urging a more robust analysis in order to increase resiliency to drought and climate change. The Sites Project Authority will continue working with state and federal agencies to complete the environmental review process and move toward implementation.

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About Sites

Sites is an offstream reservoir proposed north of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, where it would not dam a major river or block fish migration in any watershed. The reservoir would only be filled by major storm runoff and would provide unique environmental benefits during dry and critical water years, and especially during extended drought periods, by conserving coldwater releases for salmon and delivering water through the Yolo Bypass to support delta smelt. Additional information can be found at: <https://www.sitesproject.org>. Follow the Sites Project on social media @SitesProject.