



GET INVOLVED!

Now, more than ever, California needs to address its statewide water management challenges by implementing innovative solutions that address our state's need for a sustainable water supply. Sites Reservoir will significantly improve the state's water management system in drier periods, and restore much needed flexibility and reliability.

- ☐ Like us on Facebook at [**facebook.com/sitesproject**](https://facebook.com/sitesproject)
- ☐ Follow us on Twitter at [**twitter.com/sitesproject**](https://twitter.com/sitesproject)
- ☐ Share our [**fact sheets**](#) or videos
- ☐ Send a letter of support and add your logo to our line-up of supporters
- ☐ Allow Sites Reservoir Project to include your organization's name on their list of supporters
- ☐ Feature Sites in your organization's newsletter
- ☐ Distribute an e-blast about Sites
- ☐ Schedule a Sites presentation for your organization
- ☐ Schedule a tour of the Sites Reservoir location in Maxwell, Calif., for your organization's leadership

Email us at [**info@sitesproject.org**](mailto:info@sitesproject.org) to schedule a presentation or tour, and visit us online at [**sitesproject.org**](https://sitesproject.org) for more information.



Sites Reservoir SAMPLE SUPPORT LETTER

Date

Mr. Jim Watson
General Manager
Sites Project Authority
P.O. Box 517
122 Old Hwy 99W
Maxwell, CA 95955

Dear (name):

(We) / (I) understand that the Sites Reservoir project offers a unique opportunity to construct a multi-benefit water storage infrastructure project that helps to achieve local, state and federal goals for water supply reliability, the environment, the economy and flood protection. The 1.8 million acre-foot off-river reservoir will capture and store storm-related water and excess flood flows from the Sacramento River. Water stored in Sites Reservoir will then be available for use during drier years. Sites Reservoir will be operated to improve water supply resilience to climate change, increasing our statewide water reliability when it's most needed.

Sites Reservoir will provide the following statewide benefits:

- Improve water reliability and resiliency for the state of California during drier years.
- Increase Northern California's surface storage capacity by 15 percent.
- Supply dedicated water for the environment to be managed by federal and state resource agencies.
- Improve the local and regional economy by creating hundreds of construction-related jobs.
- Protect regional and statewide jobs for workers in rural and urban communities tied to the agricultural economy.
- Contribute to California's renewable energy goals.
- Support flood management and groundwater recharge.
- Create recreational opportunities for communities.

For the above reasons, you can count on (our organization) / (me) as a positive supporter of the project, and look forward to seeing Sites Reservoir become a reality.

Sincerely,

NAME
TITLE
ORGANIZATION

Sites Reservoir SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Whereas California has recently experienced more frequent, intense rain storms, less snowpack, and longer, more intense stretches of drought which impact people, farms and the environment; and,

Whereas California's water infrastructure is stressed beyond its current capabilities; and,

Whereas sustainable water management is a priority now and in the future, and a diverse portfolio of actions must be pursued to address our current and future water challenges; and,

Whereas additional surface water storage must be part of the overall solution; and,

Whereas Sites Reservoir, an off-river reservoir, will be operated to provide significantly more water during drier periods, complementing other drought management tools; and,

Whereas Sites Reservoir offers a unique opportunity to construct a multi-benefit water storage infrastructure project that helps to achieve local, state and federal goals for water supply reliability, the environment, the economy and flood protection; and,

Whereas Sites Reservoir will be operated to increase the resiliency of water supplies because it will not rely on spring snowmelt for filling, but instead will capture storm-related runoff and a portion of storm-related flood water; and,

Whereas Sites Reservoir will also provide critical environmental benefits with nearly half of the project's annual water supplies dedicated to environmental needs; and,

Whereas Sites is currently advancing through the project's permitting and environmental review process and concurrently continues development of the project engineering design and operational parameters; and,

Whereas (insert city/county/organization) is committed to advancing critical water supply solutions;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that (insert name) supports the construction of Sites Reservoir.

Sites Reservoir: A Needed Solution

SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

An upgrade to California's water storage infrastructure is long overdue. More frequent, intense rain storms, less snowpack, and longer, more intense stretches of drought make it harder for the existing system to capture water for use in drier years. A portfolio of diverse actions must be taken to improve water supply resiliency while at the same time protecting the environment. This includes building Sites Reservoir, which will be operated to provide significantly more water during drier periods, complementing other drought-management tools in addressing California's water management challenges into the 21st century and beyond.

The project offers a unique opportunity to construct a multi-benefit water storage infrastructure project that helps to achieve local, state and federal goals for water supply reliability, the environment, the economy and flood protection.

Strategically located in Colusa and Glenn Counties 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell, Sites Reservoir will be a 1.8 million acre-foot, off-river storage facility. This reservoir would capture and store storm-related water and excess flood flows from the Sacramento River, after all other water rights and regulatory requirements are met.

Sites Reservoir will be operated to improve water supply system resilience to fluctuations in weather. Much of the rainfall from extreme events – especially those that occur back-to-back when the ground is saturated – runs off before it can be captured for environmental, urban and agricultural benefits. Sites Reservoir will increase the resiliency of water supplies because it will not rely on spring snowmelt for filling, as is the case with other northern California reservoirs. In fact, Sites Reservoir will increase Northern California's surface storage capacity in the Sacramento Valley by 15 percent, which will become a critical resource to manage through the next drought.

Sites Reservoir will add up to 500,000 acre-feet annually, on average, to California's water system and over 700,000 in drier periods.

Sites Reservoir will also provide critical environmental benefits that do not currently exist in the system, but are needed to help aquatic species and habitat withstand drier years. Nearly half of the project's annual water supplies will be dedicated to environmental needs and managed by state and federal agencies. Sites Reservoir will store water to release for the environment during drier years when water is scarce, improving water quality and reliability in the Delta by releasing nutrient-rich water and improve conditions for Delta smelt and other species.

Sites Reservoir will also benefit the local and regional economy in a portion of California that continues to struggle economically. It will create hundreds of construction-related jobs during each year of the seven-year construction period and nearly 60 long-term jobs related to operations and recreation. Additionally, it will help to protect the thousands of regional and statewide jobs for workers in rural and urban communities whose livelihoods are tied to our state's vibrant agricultural economy.

As 2019 unfolds, Sites will advance the project's permitting and environmental review as it continues development of the project engineering design and operational parameters. The Sites Project Authority will continue working with its current partners and is seeking additional partners to participate in the project.

Sites Reservoir truly is a 21st century solution to some of California's toughest water supply challenges. The time is right to build on this momentum and growing support to ensure Sites Reservoir gets across the finish line before the next drought.

For more information, please visit www.sitesproject.org.

Sites Reservoir's Primary Benefits:

- Reliable dry-year water for California communities, farms, and businesses
- Improved water quality
- Groundwater recharge
- Environmental water in dry years for native fish and Pacific Flyway habitat for migratory birds and other native species
- Contribution to California's renewable energy goals
- Flood management
- Recreational opportunities
- Job protection and creation

Sites Reservoir SAMPLE E-BLAST

An upgrade to California's water storage infrastructure is long overdue. The reality of climate change – more frequent, intense rain storms, less snowpack, and longer, more intense stretches of drought, make it harder for the existing system to capture water for use in drier years. The state's existing water infrastructure is stressed beyond its capabilities. A diverse portfolio of actions must be taken to improve water supply resiliency and concurrently protect the environment. **Sites Reservoir is a critically important part of the solution to California's water challenges.**

The project offers a unique opportunity to construct a multi-benefit water storage infrastructure project that helps to achieve local, state and federal goals for water supply reliability, the environment, the economy and flood protection.

Strategically located in rural Colusa and Glenn Counties, Sites Reservoir will be a 1.8 million acre-foot, off-river storage facility. This reservoir would capture and store storm-related water and excess flood flows from the Sacramento River after all other water rights and regulatory requirements are met. **Had Sites Reservoir been operational in 2019, California would have been able to capture more than one million acre-feet of additional water for people, farms and the environment.**

SITES RESERVOIR FAST FACTS

Creates additional 1.8 MILLION ACRE-FOOT, off-stream storage for drier years

Increases Northern California water storage capacity by 15 PERCENT

Creates RELIABLE SUPPLIES for environmental, agricultural, and municipal uses

Adds up to 500,000 ACRE-FEET annually, on average, to California's water system

29 PARTICIPATING AGENCIES representing communities across California

Supported by water agencies, labor, business, agricultural and community groups throughout the state, Sites Reservoir is part of the portfolio of solutions to California's toughest water management challenges. The time is right to build on this momentum and growing support to ensure Sites Reservoir gets across the finish line before the next drought.

For more information, please visit www.sitesproject.org.



SITES RESERVOIR

Increasing Drier Year Supplies

Now more than ever, California needs to address its statewide water management challenges by implementing innovative solutions that address our state's need for a sustainable and affordable water supply.

Managing our state's water resources remains one of the greatest challenges that will continue to face California policy makers well into the future. The state's water infrastructure is getting older and stressed beyond its capabilities.

Sites Reservoir will significantly improve the state's water management system in drier periods, and restore much needed flexibility and reliability that has been lost in the system.



How It Works

Located 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell in rural Glenn and Colusa counties, the Sites Reservoir would be an off-stream storage facility that captures and stores stormwater flows in the Sacramento River—after all other water rights and regulatory requirements are met—for release in dry and critical years for environmental use and for California communities, farms and businesses when it is so desperately needed.

When operated in coordination with other Northern California reservoirs such as Shasta, Oroville and Folsom, which function as the backbone to both the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project, Sites Reservoir will greatly increase flexibility, reliability and resiliency of statewide water supplies in drier periods.

With Sites Reservoir, California has a rare opportunity to enhance statewide water supplies and provide a dedicated allocation of water specifically for the environment.

It provides federal and state resource agencies with a dedicated and reliable supply of water they can manage to provide environmental benefits, especially during drier years.

Up to half of the project's annual water supplies will be provided for environmental flows, which will help to improve conditions for Delta smelt; help preserve cold-water pools in Shasta later into the summer months to support salmon development, spawning and rearing; and improve Pacific Flyway habitat for migratory birds and other native species.

Sites Reservoir Fast Facts



Provide water for up to **1.2 million homes and businesses** for one year



Increases Sacramento Valley water storage capacity by up to **15 percent**



Creates **reliable supplies** for environmental, agricultural, and municipal uses



Adds up to **500,000 acre-feet** annually, on average, to California's water system and over 700,000 in drier periods



29 participating agencies representing communities across California



Sites Reservoir Benefits

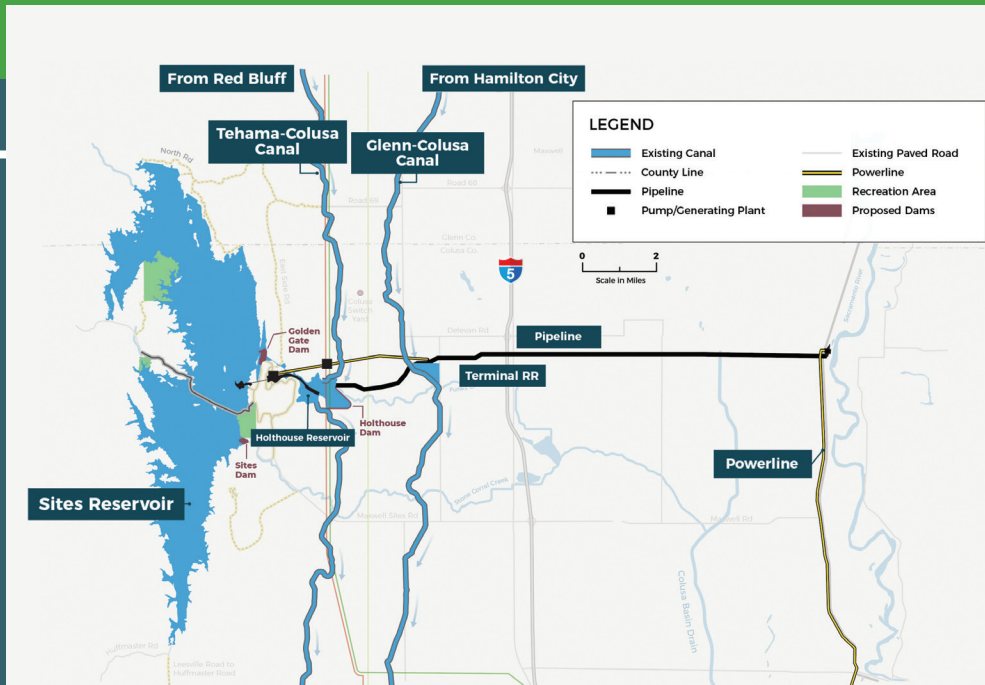
- **Reliable dry-year water supply for California communities, farms and businesses**
- **Improved water quality**
- **Groundwater recharge**
- **Flood management**
- **Contribution to California's renewable energy goals**
- **Environmental water in drier periods for native fish and Pacific Flyway habitat for migratory birds and other native species**
- **Recreational opportunities**
- **Creation and protection of middle class jobs, including a large skilled work force during seven-year construction**





Support and Funding

Widely supported both regionally and statewide, the project has made significant progress. A bipartisan group of more than 175 organizations, agencies, businesses and elected officials support the Sites Reservoir Project. In 2018, the project was awarded \$816 million in funding from California's Proposition 1 water bond, and secured a \$449 million investment from the United States Department of Agriculture. The United States Bureau of Reclamation is also a significant project partner.



The Sites Reservoir would be an off-stream storage facility located 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell, California in rural Colusa County.

Sites Reservoir Participating Entities

Colusa County *
Colusa County Water District *
Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District *
Glenn County *
Placer County Water Agency &
City of Roseville *
Reclamation District 108 *
Sacramento County Water Agency &
City of Sacramento *
Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority *
Westside Water District *
Maxwell Irrigation District **
TC 4 **
Western Canal Water District **
American Canyon, City of
Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency
CA Department of Water Resources
(Ex Officio)
Carter MWC
Coachella Valley Water District
Cortina Water District
Davis Water District
Desert Water Agency
Dunnigan Water District
LaGrande Water District
Metropolitan Water District
San Bernardino Valley Municipal WD
San Geronio Pass Water Agency
Santa Clara Valley Water District
Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency
US Bureau of Reclamation (Cost-share)
Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa WSD
Zone 7 Water Agency

* Authority Board Member
** Associate Board Member



What Makes Sites Reservoir Different?

Features	Benefits
Off-stream storage	Does not create barriers to native fish migration Improves local flood management Improved conservation of stored water to be available when it is needed most
Cooperative operations	Increases effectiveness and efficiency of existing water storage infrastructure
Sacramento Valley-led	Aligns with Sacramento Valley's values Authority will be an integral part of community Fosters regional and statewide collaboration
Beneficiary pays	Provides equity among participating partners Improves accountability and value creation
Federal and state agencies manage environmental water	Adaptable to current and future conditions and priorities Ensures federal and state environmental priorities are met—today and into the future
Adaptable to climate change	Operational flexibility to ensure the water will be applied to the highest beneficial uses despite an uncertain future

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.SITESPROJECT.ORG.





SITES RESERVOIR

Water for the Environment

California is facing multiple challenges in how it manages its water infrastructure and supply, including concerns regarding rising temperatures, declining snowpack, longer dry seasons, and more volatile precipitation. This presents challenges to the state's ability to meet its goal of creating a win-win scenario, including a more reliable water supply and protecting and enhancing the environment. To be successful, California's policy makers must advance a portfolio of actions that includes new water storage.

Sites Reservoir Project is a water storage enhancement to the California water system that will provide multiple environmental benefits to improve aquatic habitat conditions and withstand dry year conditions. This reservoir will be operated to accommodate climate change and improve environmental and water supply system resilience.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Up to 40 percent of the project's water would be dedicated for and managed by state and federal agencies to address environmental needs.
- Nearly 40,000 acre feet of water would be available for managed refuges and wetlands north and south of the Delta, providing a more sustainable water supply to benefit migratory birds and other species.
- With the anticipated reduction in snow-melt, cold water stored in the existing reservoirs will be reduced, making it more difficult to manage the temperature of water released for salmon and other species downstream. The operation of Sites Reservoir will allow Shasta, Oroville and Folsom to hold more cold water later into the summer months for the benefit of fisheries.
- Project operations will also improve water quality and reliability in the Delta by releasing nutrient-rich water to improve conditions for Delta smelt, among other species.

Sites Reservoir will be operated to provide significantly more water during drier periods, complementing other drought-management tools in addressing California's water management challenges into the 21st century and beyond.

As Sites Reservoir moves through the final permitting process, the Sites Project Authority is working with the NGO community, state, and federal agencies to ensure that the environmental water from Sites is managed appropriately. For more information, please visit www.sitesproject.org.



About Sites Reservoir

Located 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell in rural Colusa and Glenn Counties, Sites Reservoir would create additional off-stream storage for drier periods.



How It Works

The reservoir will capture and store storm-related runoff and flood flows in the Sacramento River after all other water rights and regulatory requirements are met.



SITES RESERVOIR

WATER FOR DRIER PERIODS

How it will operate

An upgrade to California's water storage infrastructure is long overdue to restore flexibility and adapt to future uncertainties and changing priorities. The reality of a changing climate – flashier rain storms, less snowpack, and longer, more intense stretches of drought, make it harder for the existing system to capture water for use in drier years. Simply put, the state's existing water infrastructure is challenged to meet our human and environmental needs. A portfolio of solutions must be developed to improve water supply resiliency, including new surface water storage. Sites Reservoir, which is strategically located to support existing infrastructure, will provide significantly more water during drier periods. The reservoir will complement other drought-management tools in addressing California's water management challenges into the 21st century and beyond.

A FLEXIBLE STORAGE SOLUTION

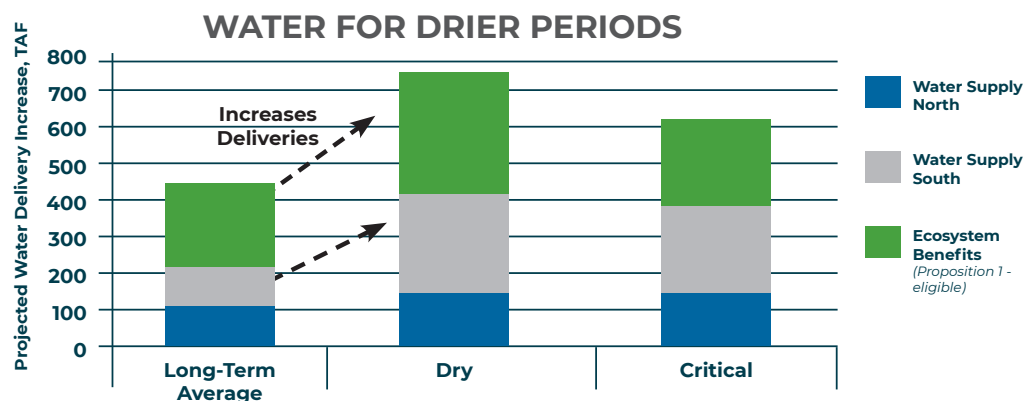
Sites Reservoir does not rely on snow-melt but captures winter runoff from uncontrolled streams below the existing reservoirs in the Sacramento Valley. Because of this, it will inherently adapt to future climate conditions and will be operated to improve water supply resilience to the predicted changes in weather. Much of the rainfall from extreme events – especially those that occur back-to-back when the ground is saturated – runs off before it can be captured for maximum environmental, urban and agricultural benefit. Sites Reservoir will increase the resiliency of water supplies because it will not rely on spring snowmelt for filling, but instead will capture storm-related runoff and a portion of storm-related flood water.

By operating in conjunction with other California reservoirs, Sites Reservoir substantially increases water supply flexibility, reliability and resiliency in drier years. Deliveries from Shasta, Oroville and Folsom – the northern backbone for State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) – are vulnerable to cutbacks during dry years. **Sites Reservoir is the only proposed storage facility in the State of California that will help with statewide operational effectiveness of the SWP and CVP.**

FACT:

Sites Reservoir was first proposed decades ago by DWR as a necessary addition to the SWP to maximize operational capacity.

Sites Reservoir would increase Northern California's water storage capacity by 15 percent by helping to meet increased needs for water when it is needed most during drier periods.



LOCALLY MANAGED

The Sites Project Authority – a joint powers authority comprised of 11 Sacramento Valley entities – will govern, manage and operate the \$5.2 billion project. The Authority is currently advancing the project's environmental review and permitting, along with preliminary design and operations planning.

For more information, please visit www.sitesproject.org.

According to a recent report by the California Public Policy Institute, "The best option for increasing supply is capturing and storing additional water from big storms."



SPRING 2019

Broad Support for Sites

- California Agricultural Irrigation Association
- California Alliance for Jobs
- California Building Industry Association
- Cal Chamber
- California Farm Bureau
- California Rice Commission
- California State Council of Laborers
- California Waterfowl Association
- Ducks Unlimited
- Grasslands Water District
- Northern California Water Association
- Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
- Southern California Water Coalition
- State Water Contractors
- State Building & Construction Trades Council
- Western Growers

Partial List – April 2019

Sites Project Authority & Our Partners

Colusa County *

**Colusa County
Water District ***

**Glenn-Colusa
Irrigation District ***

Glenn County *

**Placer County Water Agency
& City of Roseville ***

Reclamation District 108 *

**Sacramento County Water
Agency & City of
Sacramento ***

**Tehama-Colusa
Canal Authority ***

Westside Water District*

TC 4 **

Cortina Water District

Davis Water District

Dunnigan Water District

LaGrande Water District

**Western Canal
Water District ****

American Canyon, City of

**Antelope Valley-East Kern
Water Agency**

**Department of Water
Resources (Ex Officio)**

Carter MWC

**Coachella Valley Water
District**

Desert Water Agency

Metropolitan Water District

**San Bernardino Valley
Municipal Water District**

**San Geronio Pass
Water Agency**

**Santa Clara Valley
Water District**

**Santa Clarita Valley
Water Agency**

**US Bureau of Reclamation
(Cost-share)**

**Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa
WSD**

Zone 7 Water Agency

*** Authority Board Member**

**** Associate Board Member**

Los Angeles Times

<https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-sac-skelton-water-storage-california-20190304-story.html>

California should stop thinking about more dams. The state is brimming with them

By George Skelton

March 4, 2019



Jim Watson, general manager of the Sites Project Authority, stands in 2015 at the point in the Sacramento River where a pipeline would be built to fill the proposed Sites Reservoir near Maxwell, Calif. (Max Whittaker / For the Times)

Think California should build a lot more dams to catch these deluges? Forget it.

Yes, the next severe drought is inevitable. And after California dries out and becomes parched again, we'll wish we'd saved more of the current torrents. Instead, the precious water is washing out to sea.

There's one dam being planned north of Sacramento in Colusa County that makes sense: Sites. There are also some dam expansion projects that could work.

But California is already dammed to the brim. Every river worth damming has been. And some that weren't worth it were dammed anyway.

Some old proposed dam locations were found to be earthquake-risky. Quake faults tend to frustrate reservoir planning in this state.

The fact is, however, there are nearly 1,500 dams in California. At least 1,000 are major, and 55 can hold 100,000 acre-feet or more of water. There are 36 reservoirs that can contain at least 200,000 acre-feet. Eleven are in the 1-million-plus category.

An acre-foot is 326,000 gallons, enough to supply two average households for a year. The biggest California dam is Shasta on the Sacramento River with a capacity of 4.5 million acre-feet. Southern California's largest reservoir is Diamond Valley near Hemet at 810,000 acre-feet.

In total, California dams can store 43 million acre-feet. We're nearing the practical limit for what water geeks call "surface storage."

We've about used all the good dam sites.

And dams have become almost unaffordable, like a lot of other things in California. People may like the idea of a brand new reservoir — until they realize who's going to pay for most of it. They are, through higher water bills.

The way it works is this: Beneficiaries pay. Water used by farmers, manufacturers or homeowners is paid for by those people. Water that benefits the public — for recreation and flood control, for fish and the environment — is paid for by taxpayers.

"Water storage is of value if you can afford it," says Jeffrey Mount, a water expert at the Public Policy Institute of California and a former UC Davis earth sciences professor. But he questions the value of most new dam proposals.

"It's not just that it's expensive to build," Mount says. "It's also that there's not that much more available water. It makes no sense to build storage if you can't fill it. There are places you can put reservoirs, but the average amount of water yield a year is relatively low."

That's hard to believe after kayaks were used for street travel near the Russian River last week and Interstate 5 in the Sacramento Valley was closed because of high floodwaters.

"Right now everybody thinks all this water is rolling out to San Francisco Bay and there are missed opportunities," Mount says. "That's the traditional 'wasting into the ocean' argument. But then ask yourself, how much of the time does that happen in California? Things have been pretty dry the last few years.

"If you use these reservoirs only about every 10 years, if they don't fill often enough, then they're not paying for themselves."

Water sales are how the dams mostly get paid for.

Moreover, one dirty secret about dams — a very major flaw — is that they tend to silt up, gradually reducing a reservoir's capacity. This is especially true of smaller reservoirs in the coast range, where incoming water rolls over mushier ground than found on the west slope of the Sierra. There, streams tumble over firm granite.

A 2009 UC Berkeley report estimated that about 1.8 million acre-feet of storage space had been lost to silt. It found that nearly 190 reservoirs had lost more than 50% of their original capacity.

Former state Sen. Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills) told me two years ago that she tried several times to pass legislation appropriating money for silt cleanup. She also sponsored a bill requiring a state study. But the measures were killed.

“I knew full well taking out silt would be quicker and less expensive than building a new storage reservoir,” she said. “But the priority was to build more dams.”

Mount told me at the time: “It’s never going to get better.... All [reservoirs] are losing some fraction of capacity. That’s a universal truth. It’s happening around the world. It’s a global engineering challenge.” Sites is one dam project that the water world tends to believe makes sense. Mount says “it’s probably doable.”

Most environmental groups seem ambivalent. Sites would be an off-stream reservoir, so it wouldn’t block salmon from their spawning beds.

A pipe would funnel Sacramento River water 14 miles west to the reservoir, which could hold 1.8 million acre-feet. It would be California’s seventh-largest reservoir.

The cost is pegged at \$5.2 billion. The state has tentatively kicked in \$816 million in bond money for “public benefits.” The feds have loaned \$450 million. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has offered to buy 50,000 acre-feet annually.

But complete funding is far from assured. And the project is still preparing environmental reports and trying to secure permits. “We’re on track,” says Jim Watson, general manager of the Sites project.

If Sites had been operational, he asserts, I-5 would have been spared from flooding.

Good point. Sites should be built. And the height of at least one dam — Los Vaqueros in Contra Costa County — should be raised and will be.

But the future for California water storage is underground.

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<http://agalert.com/story/?id=12736>

Commentary: Sites Reservoir offers innovative water solutions

Issue Date: February 20, 2019

By Jim Watson

Managing our state's water resources remains one of the greatest challenges that will continue to face California policy makers well into the future.

The state's water infrastructure is getting older and stressed beyond its capabilities. Our demands for water to serve our communities, to fuel our economy and to preserve our environment have increased far beyond what the system was designed to reliably and sustainably support. Changing weather conditions only exacerbate an already unsustainable situation.

As we experienced in the 2012-16 drought, our current water management system simply can no longer support our ability to manage through future droughts without incurring severe and dire consequences to our communities, farms, businesses and the environment. Now more than ever, California needs to address its statewide water management challenges by implementing innovative solutions that address our state's need for a sustainable and affordable water supply.

When operating, Sites Reservoir will provide significantly more water during drier periods, to become a new drought-management tool to address California's water management challenges into the 21st century and beyond. Innovative and environmentally sound, Sites Reservoir will provide water to enhance the environment when it can provide greater benefits and provide a resilient and reliable supply of water for our communities, farms and businesses.

Located 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell in rural Colusa County, the Sites Reservoir would be a 1.8 million acre-foot offstream storage facility that captures and stores stormwater flows in the Sacramento River—after all other water rights and regulatory requirements are met—for release in dry and critical years for environmental use and for California communities, farms and businesses when it is so desperately needed.

When operated in coordination with other Northern California reservoirs such as Shasta, Oroville and Folsom, which function as the backbone to both the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project, Sites Reservoir will greatly increase the flexibility, reliability and resiliency of statewide water supplies in drier years for environmental, agricultural and urban uses. It will increase the overall surface storage capacity in the Sacramento Valley by 15 percent, which will become a critical resource to manage through the next drought.

Simply put, Sites Reservoir can significantly improve the state's existing water management system in drier years and restore the much-needed flexibility that has been lost. Had Sites Reservoir been operational in 2017, California would have had a staggering 1.8 million acre-feet of additional water stored. This vital water supply would be available to meet the needs of our communities, farms,

businesses and the environment during dry water years or during the next drought, when a reliable water supply is needed the most.

Currently, water reliability for communities, farms and businesses depends on a healthy ecosystem. An exciting component of Sites Reservoir is to provide federal and state resource agencies with a dedicated and reliable supply of water they can manage to provide environmental benefits, especially during drier years. This includes providing up to half of the project's annual water supplies to environmental flows, which will improve conditions for delta smelt; help preserve cold-water pools in Shasta later into the summer months to support salmon development, spawning and rearing; and improve Pacific Flyway habitat for migratory birds and other native species.

In addition, Sites Reservoir will benefit the local and regional economy in a portion of California that continues to struggle economically. It will create hundreds of construction-related jobs during each year of the seven-year construction period, and nearly 60 long-term jobs related to operations and recreation. Additionally, it will help to protect the thousands of regional and statewide jobs for people in rural and urban communities whose livelihoods are tied to our state's vibrant agricultural economy. Several Northern California public agencies are developing Sites Reservoir to operate in a sensible and sustainable manner that helps the state meet its water system needs. Widely supported both regionally and statewide, the project has made significant progress.

In 2018, Sites was awarded \$816 million in funding from the Proposition 1 water bond. Just a few months later, the project secured a \$449 million investment from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation plans to become a significant cost-sharing partner.

As 2019 unfolds, the Sites Project Authority will advance the project's permitting and environmental review, as it concurrently continues development of the project's engineering design and operational parameters. The Sites Project Authority will continue working with our current partners and is seeking additional partners to participate in the project.

Sites Reservoir truly is a 21st century solution to some of California's toughest water supply challenges. The time is right to build on this momentum and growing support, to ensure Sites Reservoir gets across the finish line before the next drought.

Sites Reservoir's primary benefits

- Reliable dry-year water for California communities, farms and businesses
- Improved water quality
- Groundwater recharge
- Environmental water in dry years for native fish and Pacific Flyway habitat for migratory birds and other native species
- Contribution to California renewable energy goals
- Flood management
- Recreational opportunities
- Job protection and creation

For more information, please visit www.sitesproject.org.

(Jim Watson is general manager of the Sites Project Authority in Maxwell.)



<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2018/11/27/usda-invests-innovative-management-california-water-supply>

USDA Invests in Innovative Management of California Water Supply

Press Release

Contact: USDA Press

Email: press@oc.usda.gov

(Maxwell, CA, November 27, 2018) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing more than \$449 million to help build an innovative water management system that will increase the reliability of the California water supply and create more than 560 jobs in the Sacramento Valley. Secretary Perdue was joined by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Rickey "R.D." James. The announcement follows on President Donald J. Trump's memo to promote a reliable supply and delivery of water out west.

"Modern and reliable water infrastructure is the backbone to prosperity in the Sacramento Valley and across our nation. Under the leadership of President Trump, USDA is committed to being an ally to innovative leaders taking action to rebuild rural infrastructure in California and beyond, which is why we are investing in projects like the Maxwell Water Intertie," said **Secretary Perdue**. "By working in a collaborative fashion with our state and local partners, we can balance the needs of everyone involved and ensure that the productivity of water in the Sacramento Valley is around for generations of farmers and ranchers to come."

"Every westerner knows the saying 'whiskey's for drinking and water's for fighting,' but President Trump, Secretary Perdue and I are trying to make that obsolete. We all share a commitment to storing and delivering water for farmers, families and commercial users in California," said **Secretary Zinke**. "In order to meet the demands of the future, we need to increase our storage capacity and bring our water infrastructure in to the 21st century. Large-scale water infrastructure projects, like the Maxwell Water Intertie and the Sites Reservoir projects which the Department partners on, will directly benefit from the nearly half-billion dollars that Secretary Perdue is making available."

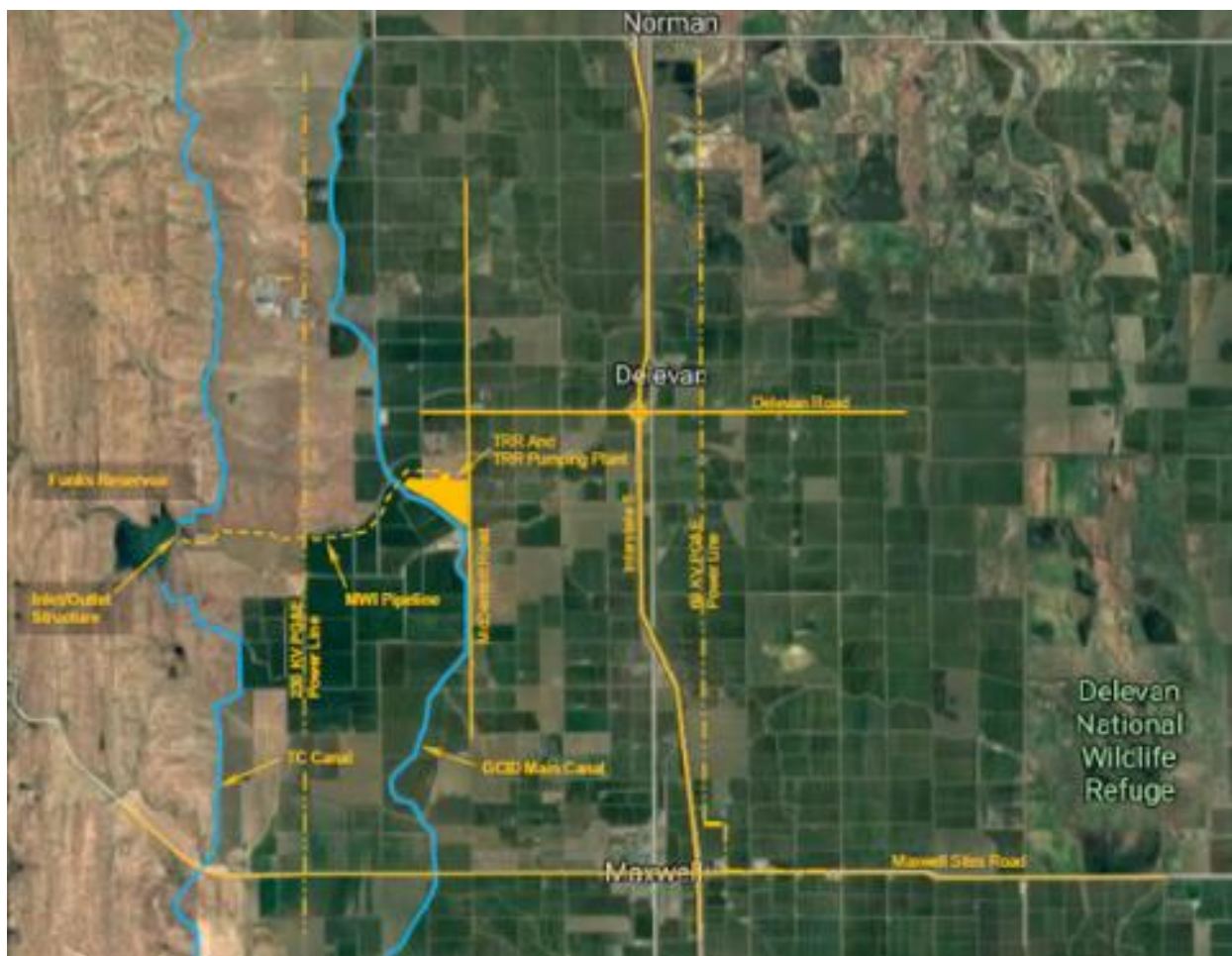
"The Army is committed to working with our federal, state and local partners to carefully manage the water resources of the Sacramento Valley," said **R.D. James, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works**. "This project represents the President's ongoing commitment to rural America to ensure the effective functioning of the nation's agricultural economy."

"The Maxwell Water Intertie will increase the efficiency and reliability of water management in the western Sacramento Valley by adding to and improving existing water infrastructure to facilitate greater flexibility in water conveyance, which would increase the drought resistance of rural communities and help to support our region's agricultural economy," said **Jim Watson, General Manager, Sites Project Authority**.

Background:

Made possible through USDA's Community Facilities direct loan program, the Maxwell Water Intertie (MWI) facilities would connect the existing Tehama Colusa Canal (TC Canal) and the existing Glenn Colusa Irrigation District's (GCID) main canal. These facilities would increase water management flexibility and improve water supply resiliency for participants during dry years and directly increase the efficiency and reliability of water management in the western Sacramento Valley.

The MWI includes the construction of 3 ½ miles of 12-foot diameter pipeline along with a new pump station that will be used to pump water from the GCID system to the existing Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority's (TCCA) Funks Reservoir. Exchanges of water from Funks Reservoir to the GCID system will occur through the new pipeline by gravity flow in the reverse direction. The project also includes the construction of a new 1,200 acre-foot Terminal Regulating Reservoir (TRR) to be constructed adjacent to the GCID Main Canal that will help to regulate flows in the GCID main canal and support the operation of the Maxwell Water Intertie facilities. You may click on the images below to view larger maps online.



You may click the above image to view the online map or visit the Maxwell Water Location Map (PDF, 98.5 KB).



You may click the above image to view the online map or visit the Maxwell Overview Map (PDF, 1.0 MB).

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the Rural Prosperity infographic (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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The proposed Sites Reservoir would be located in Glenn and Colusa counties, west of the Sacramento River. This photo was taken near Maxwell in Colusa County. (Photo by Katz & Associates.)

California needs Sites Reservoir. Here's why

Guest Commentary  | July 7, 2019 | [COMMENTARY](#), [ECONOMY](#), [ENVIRONMENT](#), [MY TURN](#), [WATER](#)



By Fritz Durst and Douglas Headrick, *Special to CALmatters*

<https://calmatters.org/articles/commentary/sites-reservoir-need/>

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California's aging water infrastructure desperately needs an upgrade.

Shorter, more intense rain storms, less snowpack and more prolonged stretches of drought reflect the reality of climate change. There's no one project, no single action, that will save California from a dry and unreliable water future.

We need a broad portfolio of solutions that includes storage above and below ground, conservation, and other options such as traditional recycled and potable reuse to help ensure we can better manage this vital resource when the next inevitable drought comes along.

And we also need cooperation at local, state and federal levels to advance a 21st century solution.

One part of that solution is the [proposed Sites Reservoir](#).

Located in Colusa and Glenn counties west of the Sacramento River, Sites would be multi-benefit 1.8-million-acre foot reservoir. It would capture and store storm water capture that currently runs to the ocean.

Today, much rainfall from extreme storms, especially those that occur back-to-back when the ground is saturated, runs off before it can be conserved for use when environmental, urban and agricultural needs are greater.

Sites Reservoir would capture a portion of that water for use during drier periods, and would become part of other drought-management tools that would addressing California's water management challenges into the 21st century and beyond.

Simply put, Sites Reservoir would significantly improve the state's existing water management system in drier years and restore much needed flexibility in the water grid.

If Sites Reservoir had been operational this year, California would have been able to capture more than one million acre-feet of additional water. An average California household uses between one-half and one acre-foot of water per year.

Each year we delay in building Sites Reservoir we lose an opportunity to increase the value of storm-related water and excess flood flows for multiple benefits, including the environment.

In fact, Sites Reservoir would help provide critical environmental benefits that do not currently exist, but are needed to help aquatic species and other habitat withstand drier year conditions. Up to 40% of the project's water would be dedicated for state and federal agencies to address these environmental needs.

With the continued onset of climate change, the cold water stored in other, upstream, major reservoirs will be less, making it more difficult to manage the temperature of water released for salmon and other species downstream.

During drier periods, the operation of Sites Reservoir will allow Shasta, Oroville and Folsom reservoirs to conserve more cold water later into the summer months for the benefit of fisheries.

In addition, Sites Reservoir would benefit the local and regional economy in a portion of California that continues to struggle economically, through job creation and local flood protection.

Project construction would create hundreds of jobs during the construction period of seven years, using a skilled and trained workforce, who would be paid a living wage to support a strong middle class in Northern California.

In addition, Sites would provide critically-needed flood protection to disadvantaged communities and to Interstate 5, which was closed twice in the last three years due to major floods in Colusa County.

Several Northern California public agencies are developing Sites Reservoir to operate in a sensible and sustainable manner that helps the state balance the needs for environmental, urban and agricultural water supplies.

Because of its many benefits, the project enjoys broad support and has secured \$816 million in state funding and \$449 million in federal funding. Currently, 29 agencies throughout California are participating in the project's development, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has signaled its intent to become a major cost-sharing partner.

California must modernize its water supply systems. We believe, along with many others, that Sites is a critical piece to the puzzle. With Gov. Gavin Newsom in office and a new energy in the Capitol, we must advance this project.

The voters in 2014 overwhelmingly passed Proposition 1, which expressed the voters desire that more water storage needs to be in place before the next drought. California simply can't afford to wait any longer to build Sites Reservoir.

Fritz Durst is chair of the Sites Joint Powers Agreement board of directors, Fritz.durst@gmail.com. Douglas Headrick general manager of the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, douglash@sbvmwd.com. They wrote this commentary for CALmatters.

San Francisco Chronicle

OPINION

Sites Reservoir needed for reliable water future

By Andrew Meredith

Aug. 2, 2019



Cattle graze in the Sites Valley, the location of a proposed reservoir, near Maxwell, Calif. Democratic Rep. John Garamendi and Republican Rep. Doug LaMalfa have proposed legislation for a federal study of the costs of building the Sites Reservoir in the valley that is about an hour's drive north of Sacramento. California's drought has sparked a new push by federal lawmakers to create or expand a handful of reservoirs around the state. (AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli)

A flexible, reliable water supply is essential to California's economy and to the job creation and job security goals of California's working families. Reliability and flexibility in our water supply has become elusive in drought-prone California, thanks in large part to a changing climate and an obsolete water storage system that was designed to utilize a steady and massive Sierra snowpack.

It's well past time to make critical investments in water infrastructure — particularly water storage — to sustain us through future droughts and help us adapt to our new normal, one which includes extended droughts, diminished snowpack, warmer winter storms and a need for a more flexible water storage portfolio. Without a new approach, California is destined to see a reoccurrence of the devastation brought upon by the seven-year-long drought we just experienced.

Of all the projects vying for California's attention, the proposed Sites Reservoir in Northern California offers the most tangible benefits. Located in Colusa and Glenn counties, Sites Reservoir is a proposed multi-benefit 1.8-million-acre-foot off-river storage reservoir designed to capture and store water from major storms. Sites supports state and federal goals for water supply reliability, the environment, the economy and flood protection, all while significantly improving the state's water management system in drier years.

Today, much of the rainfall from extreme storm events — especially those that occur back to back when the ground is saturated — heads seaward before it can be captured for maximum benefit. Sites Reservoir will capture a portion of that water for use during drier periods, complementing other drought-management tools in addressing California's water management challenges into the 21st century and beyond. Had Sites Reservoir been operational this year, California would've been able to capture more than 1 million acre-feet of additional water.

Each year we delay building Sites Reservoir, we lose an opportunity to increase the value of storm-related water for people, the environment, farms and businesses. When operated in coordination with other Northern California reservoirs, Sites Reservoir will greatly increase the flexibility, reliability and resiliency of statewide water supplies in drier years by increasing the overall surface storage capacity in Northern California by 15%.

In addition, Sites Reservoir will benefit the local and regional economies in a portion of California that continues to struggle economically, both through job creation and flood protection. Project construction will create hundreds of good-paying jobs during the seven-year construction period. Partnerships with the building trades and other labor organizations mean the project will provide training and development of a skilled, local workforce that will be around long after construction is complete, too. Ongoing operations also will provide ancillary support for thousands of agricultural-related jobs throughout the state.

Several Northern California public agencies are developing Sites to bring a sensible and sustainable approach to water storage that balances the needs for environmental, urban and agricultural water supplies. Because of its many benefits, the project enjoys broad support and has already secured \$816 million in state funding, plus \$449 million in federal funding. Currently, 21 water agencies throughout California are participating in project development, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has signaled its intent to become a major cost-sharing partner.

California must modernize its water supply systems in order to support a healthy economy, environment and future for the state. We urge Gov. Gavin Newsom to prioritize Sites Reservoir and join labor unions, business organizations, local governments, water districts, environmental organizations and others in supporting this important project. California simply can't afford to wait any longer to build Sites Reservoir.

Andrew Meredith is an executive board member of the State Building & Construction Trades Council of California.