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Sites Project Authority to “Right size” Sites Reservoir to Meet Current and Future Water Supply Needs
Revised Environmental Documents Slated for Recirculation in 2021

Sacramento, Calif. – The Sites Project Authority (Authority) today announced its intent to revise and recirculate its environmental document for the Sites Reservoir project. Over the past several months, the Authority has undertaken a rigorous Value Planning effort to review the project’s proposed operations and facilities in an effort to develop a project that is “right sized” for current participants while still providing water supply reliability and enhancing the environment.

The process has resulted in a project that includes facilities and operations that are different than originally proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) released for public review in 2017. Due to these changes, the Authority as the California Environmental Quality Act lead agency will revise and recirculate its Draft EIR and work with landowners, tribes, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and local communities to conduct a collaborative environmental review process. The Authority will also coordinate with the Bureau of Reclamation to confirm the appropriate approach to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.

“The Value Planning process was responsive to input from our investors, state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, elected officials, landowners and local communities. By optimizing our plans for Sites Reservoir, we can design a water storage project that meets the needs of our participants and the environment today and in the future.” said Fritz Durst, chairman of the Sites Project Authority.

Sites Reservoir is a generational opportunity to construct a multi-benefit water storage project that helps restore flexibility, reliability, and resiliency to our statewide water supply. Located 10 miles west of Maxwell in rural Glenn and Colusa counties, 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 primarily in dry and critical years for environmental use and for California communities, farms and businesses when it is so desperately needed.

“By creating a resilient and reliable water supply for people and the environment during dry periods, Sites Reservoir provides a unique benefit that closely aligns with Governor Newsom’s Water Resiliency Plan,” said Jerry Brown, executive director for the Sites Project Authority.

Sites Reservoir would 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. A substantial portion of the project’s water would be dedicated to environmental flows, which would help to improve conditions for Delta smelt, and help preserve the cold-water pool in Lake Shasta later into the summer months to support salmon development, spawning and rearing. In addition, it would improve the Pacific Flyway habitat for migratory birds and other native species.

Revisions to the EIR are underway. A revised and recirculated EIR is expected to be released for public review in Summer 2021. The Authority is coordinating with the Bureau of Reclamation on how best to move forward with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with the goal of remaining a joint EIR/EIS to facilitate the public review process.

Sites is an off-stream reservoir proposed north of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, where it would provide unique water supply and environmental benefits during dry and critical water years, and especially during extended drought periods. Additional information can be found at www.sitesproject.org or on Facebook and Twitter at @SitesProject.

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