



Meeting: Reservoir Committee Agenda Item 2.2

July 22, 2022

Subject: **2022-2024 Sites Reservoir Geologic, Geophysical and Geotechnical Investigations Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and Project Approval**

Requested Action:

Recommend the following Authority Board actions for the 2022-2024 Sites Reservoir Geologic, Geophysical and Geotechnical Investigations ("Project"): (1) adoption of the CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration; (2) adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; (3) approval of the Project; and (4) authorize the Executive Director to file all related notices and pay all related fees.

Detailed Description/Background:

The Authority and Reclamation are proposing to conduct geologic, geophysical, and geotechnical investigations in Glenn, Colusa, and Yolo Counties. The purpose of the Project is to conduct field investigations and surveys to obtain data and information needed to formulate and refine the engineering design and to assist in the preparation of permit applications for the proposed Sites Reservoir and associated facilities. The three types of studies to be conducted include:

- Surface Geologic Investigations – These surveys would include mapping the existing geology of the proposed Sites Reservoir inundation area, proposed conveyance facilities, and roads. Surveys would be performed on foot within areas immediately surrounding Funks Reservoir and lands between the existing reservoir and the proposed Sites Reservoir inundation area including lands south of Hunters Creek, east and south of Funks Creek, adjacent to Maxwell Sites Road and Sites Ladoga Road, and throughout the proposed Dunnigan Pipeline corridor.
- Surface Geophysical Investigations – These walking surveys would be comprised of up to 100 transect lines within the proposed Sites Reservoir inundation area. As part of these investigations, up to 16 geologic pedestrian surveys are also proposed in other locations within the Project area. Geophysical investigations typically involve various noninvasive or minimally invasive physical methods to determine the properties of the subsurface down to about 3 feet in depth.
- Subsurface Geotechnical Investigations – These geotechnical investigations are intended to provide information on geologic conditions

20 to 550 feet below grade within small diameter holes and borings. Up to 70 pavement cores, 258 augers and borings, and 33 cone penetration test (CPT) probes are proposed within the proposed Sites Reservoir inundation area and associated conveyance facilities areas. In addition, approximately 70 piezometers (a type of groundwater monitoring well) are proposed at select auger or boring locations. This effort is conducted through exploratory pavement borings, auger and rotary wash borings with downhole testing and rock coring, and CPT probes to collect subsurface data and samples and examine material processing requirements.

Field activities are proposed to start this summer and be implemented through 2024. The Authority anticipates undertaking all field activities, including all drilling and investigation activities and biological, cultural and Tribal monitoring. All activities would be performed on willing landowner parcels and public right of way.

California Environmental Quality Act

The Authority prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) consistent with the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and in coordination with Reclamation pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality guidance for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Reclamation is the NEPA lead agency and the Authority is the CEQA lead agency. The Draft EA/IS considers two alternatives – the No Action/No Project and the proposed Project. The No Action/No Project reflects existing and reasonably foreseeable future conditions without the Project.

The EA/IS identifies several standard protocols and procedures that are incorporated as part of the proposed Project and would be implemented prior to and throughout the investigations. The EA/IS also identifies mitigation measures that would be implemented to avoid and minimize the potential for significant environmental impacts.

The EA/IS analysis concludes that the Project would not have a significant effect on the environment because:

- The Project would not affect a number of environmental resources due to the temporary, minimal and short-term nature of the Project activities, as well as a lack of certain resources within or near the Project area. Resources with no impacts include the following: aesthetics and visual resources; minerals; population and housing; public services; fluvial geomorphology; flood control and management; recreation; forestry resources; utilities and service systems; and power production/energy.
- The Project would result in less-than-significant impacts on the following: land use and agriculture; water resources and water quality; air quality, climate change, and greenhouse gas emissions; transportation and traffic; noise and vibration; and, hazards, hazardous materials, and wildfire.

- With implementation of mitigation measures, the Project would result in less than significant impacts to biological resources, paleontological resources, cultural resources, and tribal cultural resources. A summary of required mitigation measures is provided in Attachment 1. These mitigation measures include adjustments to investigation locations to the extent possible to avoid known impacts or reduce known impacts to less than significant levels. Any location where known impacts can not be avoided or reduced to less than significant levels will not be studied at this time. Measures are also included that will address the possibility of discovery of currently unknown resources during work efforts.

The Draft EA/IS was circulated for public review and comment for a 30-day period between May 23, 2022 and June 21, 2022. During the public review period, letters were received from the following public agencies: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The comments received were mostly advisory in nature or required minor clarifications to the Draft EA/IS. Minor changes to mitigation measures have been made in response to CDFW comments. These changes result in equivalent or more effective mitigation when compared to the originally proposed measures.

A Final EA/IS has been prepared to incorporate responses to the comments received and to update the Draft EA/IS with minor changes. The Final EA/IS and supporting appendices will be posted to the Authority's website and also available for review at the Authority's office. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program has also been prepared to monitor implementation of mitigation measures required to insure that Project impacts will be less than significant. Upon Project approval, the Authority will file a Notice of Determination with Glenn, Colusa, and Yolo Counties. Minor fees are required for filing this Notice, including a CDFW filing fee.

Prior Authority Board Action:

In February 2022 (Agenda Item 3.1) the Board authorized the following activities related to the 2022-2024 Sites Reservoir Geotechnical Investigations: (1) the release of the Draft EA/IS including authorizing the Executive Director to file a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse and complete other noticing requirements to initiate the public review process; and (2) the Executive Director to sign and submit the necessary permit applications including associated application fees, if any.

Fiscal Impact/Funding Source:

Actual costs to complete the CEQA compliance effort are within the amounts budgeted in both the previous Amendment 2 Work Plan and Amendment 3 Work Plan. At this time, no additional costs are anticipated beyond those budgeted for Amendment 3 to implement the proposed mitigation measures. Reclamation will be a funding partner for this effort as these geotechnical efforts are included

in the new Financial Assistance Agreement previously authorized by the Reservoir Committee and Authority Board.

Staff Contact:

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Primary Service Provider:

HDR

Attachments:

Attachment A – Summary of Mitigation Measures in the Final EA/IS

Attachment A

Summary of Mitigation Measures in the Final EA/IS

Resource Area	Summary of Mitigation Measures
General	Conduct pre-investigation siting survey; reprioritize or postpone proposed investigations if sensitive resources cannot be avoided
Biological Resources	Conduct mandatory biological resources awareness training; general measures to avoid and minimize effects on sensitive biological resources; measures to avoid and minimize effects on waters of the U.S./State; species-specific measures for state and federally listed plant and animal species along with migratory birds and eagles; and decontamination of equipment for aquatic invasive species
Paleontological Resources	Consult with qualified paleontologist if paleontological resources are discovered
Cultural Resources	Avoid impacts on cultural resources; conduct pre-activity pedestrian survey; prepare a post-review Discovery Plan; conduct archeological sensitivity training; conduct archeological monitoring, and immediately halt ground-disturbing activities if cultural resources or human remains are found and implement appropriate plans
Tribal Cultural Resources	Avoid or preserve in place; treat resources with culturally appropriate dignity, and implement permanent conservation easements for any resources found