



Meeting: **Joint Sites Reservoir Committee & Authority
Board Agenda Item 2.1**

December 16, 2022

Subject: **2023 – 2024 Proposed Sites Reservoir Test Pits, Fault Studies and Quarry Studies Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and Project Approval, Revised Staff Report as of December 14, 2022**

Requested Action:

Approve the following actions for the 2023 – 2024 Proposed Sites Reservoir Test Pits, Fault Studies and Quarry Studies (Project): (1) adoption of the CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (as revised); (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:

Additional field investigations in Glenn, Colusa, and Yolo counties are being proposed to support the ongoing engineering evaluations and design development for the proposed Sites Reservoir and its associated facilities. These field investigations include test pits, fault studies, and quarry studies. Table 1 summarizes the type and number of studies by location. The following provides a brief description of each investigation type:

- Test Pits – Test pits would be used at proposed quarry locations to gather information regarding the quantity and quality of borrow materials proposed for dam and reservoir feature construction fill. In addition, test pits at other locations would provide information regarding pipeline trench stability analysis. Proposed test pit work areas¹, including equipment and vehicle staging areas and any overnight storage areas, would be up to approximately 50 feet wide by 50 feet long.
- Fault Studies – Fault trenches would be used to gather information regarding the location and stratigraphy of suspected and known fault traces/zones and to further evaluate the areas for evidence of last movement. Fault trenches have been sited at specific existing and suspected fault line locations in proximity to proposed Sites Reservoir features. Work areas for fault trenches would be up to approximately 40 feet wide and range from 100 to 1,000 feet long.

¹For the purposes of this report, work areas are inclusive of equipment and vehicle staging areas along with overnight equipment and vehicle storage areas.

- Quarry Studies – Quarry study trenches would be used to gather information regarding the quantity and quality of borrow materials proposed for dam and reservoir feature construction fill and to assess the means and methods needed to remove overburden and rock materials during construction. These investigations would be conducted by trenching in areas of planned quarries for the proposed Sites Reservoir. Work areas for the quarry studies, including equipment and vehicle staging areas, would be approximately 40 feet wide and range from 1,000 to 2,300 feet long.

Table 1. Investigation Types, Approximate Numbers and Depths, and Primary Access Routes by Proposed Sites Reservoir Feature

Proposed Sites Reservoir Feature	Approximate Numbers, Investigation Types, and Approximate Depths	Primary Access Route(s)
Sites Reservoir	Up to 76 test pits, 18 to 20 feet below grade Up to 9 fault studies, 10 to 15 feet below grade Up to 7 quarry studies, 15 to 20 feet below grade	Maxwell-Sites Road, Peterson Road, and overland travel
Near Funks Reservoir	Up to 3 test pits, 18 to 20 feet below grade Up to 2 fault studies, 10 to 15 feet below grade	Tehama Colusa Canal access road, existing gravel roads west of Funks Reservoir, overland travel
Terminal Regulating Reservoir and Pipeline	Up to 4 test pits, 18 to 20 feet below grade	Tehama Colusa Canal access road, existing gravel roads east of Funks Reservoir, overland travel. If needed, PG&E easement road
Dunnigan Pipeline	Up to 1 test pit, 18 to 20 feet below grade	Road 8, Road 90B, overland travel
Total	Up to 84 test pits, 18 to 20 feet below grade Up to 11 fault studies, 10 to 15 feet below grade Up to 7 quarry studies, 15 to 20 feet below grade	N/A
Note: There are no study locations on federal property. Some study locations may be accessed through federal property using access agreements in place between landowners and the Federal government.		

Upon completion of work, each area would be returned to pre-project or better conditions. The investigations are scheduled to occur between January 2023 and December 2024. The sequence would depend on site and seasonal conditions and landowner access. Each investigation would take 1-2 days to complete for a test pit, up to 4 days for a quarry study, and up to 25 days for a fault study. All activities would be performed on willing landowner parcels and public right of way.

California Environmental Quality Act

The Authority prepared a Draft Initial Study (IS) consistent with the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines which, along with a draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), was circulated for public review and comment for a 30-day period between September 23 and October 22, 2022. The Draft IS considers two alternatives – the No Project and the proposed Project. The No Project reflects existing and reasonably foreseeable future conditions without the Project.

The IS identifies several standard protocols and procedures that are incorporated as part of the proposed Project and would be implemented before and throughout the investigations. The IS also identifies mitigation measures that would be implemented to avoid and minimize the potential for significant environmental impacts (see Attachment 1).

During the public review period, letters were received from the following: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. The comments received were mostly advisory in nature or required minor clarifications. Minor changes to mitigation measures have been made in response to CDFW comments (which are reflected in the Final IS). These changes result in equivalent or more effective mitigation when compared to the originally proposed measures. The Authority is not seeking reimbursement from Reclamation for this effort and thus, there is no federal involvement and no federal nexus for this effort.

The IS analysis concludes that the Project would not have significant impacts on the environment because:

- The Project would not impact several environmental resources due to the temporary, minimal and short-term nature of the Project activities and 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; hazards and 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 is provided in Attachment 1. These mitigation measures include adjustments to investigation locations to avoid known impacts or reduce known impacts to less than significant levels. Any location where known impacts cannot 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.

Based on agency comments and through discussion with tribes, three mitigation measures were improved after the issuance of the Draft IS and Draft MND. These included Mitigation Measure Bio-6, Giant Garter Snake; Mitigation Measure Cul-4 Conduct Archaeological and Tribal Sensitivity Training; and Mitigation Measure Cul-5 Conduct Archaeological and Tribal Monitoring. Each of these measures, as revised, is equivalent or more effective in mitigating environmental impacts as compared to the prior draft measures, and none of the changed measures themselves cause any potentially significant effect. A revised MND is included in Attachment C to this staff report. The revised MND was updated to reflect the required finding that each of these mitigation measures, as revised, are equivalent or more effective and do not cause any potentially significant effect.

A Final IS has been prepared to incorporate responses to the comments received and to update the Draft IS and appendices with minor changes. The Final IS and Mitigated Negative Declaration, which includes the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program as an attachment are included as Attachment B to this staff report. Upon Project approval², 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.

No environmental permits are required for the investigation efforts.

Prior Authority Board Action:

²The currently proposed geotechnical investigations constitute a set of preparatory actions to obtain requisite data to inform project design, engineering cost estimates, and permit requirements for the proposed future Sites Reservoir Project. These initial pre-project investigatory actions would not in any way commit the Authority or any other party to any definite course of action or decision regarding the proposed future Sites Reservoir Project, which currently is undergoing a comprehensive CEQA and NEPA review in an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement.

September 2022: The Authority Board and Reservoir Committee authorized the following activities related to the 2023 – 2024 Proposed Sites Reservoir Test Pits, Fault Studies and Quarry Studies: (1) the release of the Draft IS/MND 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 the Amendment 3 Work Plan. At this time, no additional costs are anticipated beyond those budgeted for Amendment 3 to implement the proposed mitigation measures.

Staff Contact:

Ali Forsythe

Primary Service Provider:

HDR

Attachments:

Attachment A – Summary of Mitigation Measures in the Final IS

Attachment B – 2023 – 2024 Proposed Sites Reservoir Test Pits, Fault Studies and Quarry Studies Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

Attachment C – 2023 – 2024 Proposed Sites Reservoir Test Pits, Fault Studies and Quarry Studies Mitigated Negative Declaration, Revised as of December 14, 2022

Attachment A

Summary of Mitigation Measures in the Final Initial Study

Resource Area	Summary of Mitigation Measures
General	Conduct pre-investigation siting survey for biological, cultural, and Tribal resources; 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. Adjust work locations as needed to avoid known resources.
Paleontological Resources	Consult with qualified paleontologist if paleontological resources are discovered. Adjust work locations as needed to avoid known resources.
Cultural Resources	Avoid impacts on known cultural resources; conduct pre-activity pedestrian survey; prepare a post-review Discovery Plan; conduct archeological <u>and tribal</u> sensitivity training; conduct archeological <u>and tribal</u> monitoring, and immediately halt ground-disturbing activities if cultural resources or human remains are found and implement appropriate plans. Adjust work locations as needed to avoid known resources.
Tribal Cultural Resources	Avoid or preserve in place; treat resources with culturally appropriate dignity, and implement permanent conservation easements for any resources found. Adjust work locations as needed to avoid known resources.