



For Immediate Release:

March 16, 2023

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New Analysis Finds 2023 Storms Would Have Yielded Water for Up to 2.4 Million People, Farms, and Businesses if Sites Reservoir Were Operational Today

Sacramento, CA - Today, the Sites Project Authority announced updated findings from an analysis that projected Sites Reservoir could have diverted and captured 250,000 acre-feet of water as a result of the January storms if the reservoir was operational, and an additional potential 244,000 acre-feet of water as a result of the February-March storms.

“Once again, a flood of storms in Northern California produced a significant amount of rainfall that would have been captured if Sites was operational,” said Jerry Brown, Executive Director of the Sites Project Authority. “Rain will not always come at the right time, so we must build Sites Reservoir to capture storm and floodwater for future use during dry periods.”

Sites Reservoir is a proposed off-stream reservoir specifically designed to divert and store water generated by storm events to increase California’s water flexibility, reliability, and resiliency in drier years. The analysis, based on actual river flows, found Sites Reservoir could have diverted 250,000 acre-feet of water from January 3 to March 13. Additionally, using the California-Nevada River Forecast Center’s updated river flow forecasts, it is estimated that Sites would have the potential to divert another 244,000 acre-feet of water over the next 30 days, from March 14 to April 13. A single acre-foot of water is enough to exceed the average annual indoor and outdoor water use of one to two California households, according to the Water Education Foundation.

Sites will not divert any water until all other water rights and regulatory requirements are met, but during some conditions, like California’s recent storms, it could still store water while meeting diversion criteria that protects fisheries and the environment.

“Sites is designed with both environmental values and water supply needs in mind,” said Alicia Forsythe, Environmental Planning and Permitting Manager of the Sites Project Authority. “With more extreme weather events expected in California, there are times we can safely divert water when Sacramento River flows are abundant, leaving enough water in the River and in the Delta for ecological needs.”

Sites Reservoir has broad statewide support from cities, counties, water agencies, and irrigation districts throughout the Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, Bay Area, and Southern California which are working together to advance the project. The Sites Reservoir Project is locally led by the Sites Project Authority which is made up Sacramento Valley water districts, cities, and counties.

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 periods, especially during extended drought. Additional information can be found at www.sitesproject.org or on Facebook and Twitter at @SitesProject.