

**From:** [Chris Lish](#)  
**To:** [EIR-EIS-Comments@SitesProject.org](mailto:EIR-EIS-Comments@SitesProject.org)  
**Subject:** Reject the proposed Sites Reservoir -- Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 26, 2022 3:10:15 PM

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Sites Project Authority  
P.O. Box 517  
Maxwell, CA 95955

and

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
2800 Cottage Way, W-2830  
Sacramento, CA 95825

Subject: Reject the proposed Sites Reservoir -- Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

To Sites Authority Board Chair Fritz Durst,

I strongly oppose the proposed Sites Reservoir in Northern California. The project will flood a 13,200 acre area that contains valuable habitat and divert additional water out of the Sacramento River basin, without preserving sufficient flows for Salmon species and Delta smelt.

*"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment."  
-- Ansel Adams*

The Sites Reservoir project would not produce much in the way of new water to meet the state's water demand. If built today, Sites Reservoir would increase California's water budget by a paltry 1%. But it will cost taxpayers billions of dollars, harm fish and wildlife habitat, and flood or degrade public lands that are visited by thousands of people.

Once again, the government is proposing to allow the destruction of public land for private profit. The reservoir would be owned by the Sites Project Authority, an entity made up mainly of State Water Project (SWP) water contractors and irrigation districts. The authority is already offering new water rights in watersheds where five times more water is allocated than exists to powerful water districts, such as the Metropolitan Water District (MWD). A previously filed water rights application for the Sites project asked for 3 million acre feet of water a year.

The proposal includes inundating four creeks and adding new diversion pumps from the Sacramento River in Red Bluff. It does not include protections for the Trinity River or Upper Sacramento River salmon, nor for the Tribes and fishermen that depend on

them despite the fact it will lower flows and impact water quality during low-water years. Water rights held by Tribes and counties, and flows to avert fish kills in the Klamath River, are currently not protected in the Sites proposal.

For years, the Bay-Delta ecosystem has been severely depleted of freshwater flows that has led to the loss of natural habitat for species and reduced the livelihood of residents in Delta communities. This project will hasten the decline of the Delta. In theory, these dams are supposed to mainly divert and store “surplus” water in winter and summer months, but they would also increase diversions and warm river temperatures in other times of the year. There is no “extra” water in this part of California, where up to 75% of the salmon habitat has been blocked by dams. Fisheries science has now proven that high flows during winter and spring are needed if salmon are to survive in California.

High flows have many benefits. Flushing flows in high-water years inundate floodplains, help out migrating salmon, scour out sediments and algae, move spawning gravel, and reduce fish diseases, all of which greatly increase salmon numbers. New flow science coupled with extremely low salmon returns has led the state water board to create plans to restore winter and spring flows in the Sacramento River. In the Klamath watershed, the Trinity Management Council—of which the Hoopa Valley and Yurok Tribes are members—is recommending higher winter flows in the Trinity River and a recent lawsuit has forced higher spring flows in the Klamath River to combat the *Ceratonova shasta* fish disease, which killed the majority of juvenile salmon in recent years. Steps have also been taken to use Trinity River reservoir water for fall cold water releases to prevent large scale adult fish kills in the Klamath River during droughts.

Restoring flows are needed to bring back salmon. The Sites Proposal threatens all of these actions, and it could not come at a worse time. A recent report from U.C. Davis shows that over 45% of California salmon are facing extinction. Furthermore, the Klamath River is facing the worst salmon returns in history and wild Spring Chinook returns in the Klamath, Trinity and Sacramento Rivers last year numbered in the hundreds.

*“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”*

*-- Aldo Leopold*

California needs a water management system that is in accordance with the Delta Reform Act’s policy of reducing reliance on the Delta and provides benefits and protections for California’s native fish, wildlife species, and communities. Constructing the Sites Reservoir is at odds with that policy and must be rejected.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,  
Christopher Lish  
San Rafael, CA

