

## Comments on EIR-EIS

Brien Brennan <brien.b.b@gmail.com>

Mon 1/15/2018 4:05 PM

To: EIR-EIS-Comments <eir-eis-comments@sitesproject.org>;

To whom it may concern:

It is impossible to express the depth of my sorrow around the proposed Sites Project and the small amount of opposition I've seen or heard to it. I could write pages about why this project, should it be implemented, would only serve to further accelerate the already rapid decrease in ecological integrity for the entire Sacramento River basin.

I know many proponents and supporters think the reservoir would be good on many fronts, and I know many of them do not wish harm to wildlife or future generations of humans, but like every other colossal undertaking that humans have put upon the Earth, there are short- and long-term consequences that our culture generally trains people to be indifferent to, usually subconsciously.

For example, the EIR-EIS states that this project would benefit Delta water quality and improve ecosystems, claiming "net improvements" on a number of fronts. But history shows us again and again--if we are willing to look at it honestly--that such beliefs, no matter how well intentioned, can't overcome physical and biological reality. Let's take the Sacramento River as an example, since it will be the major source for this proposed reservoir.

First of all, the state has already

over-allocated water from the river by 151% – that means that we take more water out of the river than it provides in a normal water year. The plan to take even more water from the river by increasing storage through raising Shasta Dam and enlarging its reservoir and building the proposed Sites offstream storage reservoir would severely impact water quality and habitat in the Delta, through which all of the Sacramento River's salmon and steelhead must migrate. At least that is what very legitimate science, and again, a look at the history of massive engineering of natural waterways shows us.

How many salmon used to migrate through the river, say in the 1800's? Estimates are the numbers today are less than 10% of that era. You call that progress? Valley oaks forests? Less than 3% left. Call that progress? Millions of acres used and abused to export the minerals and water right out of the state and country so that a handful of people get rich--not my idea of progress. Sounds like insanity to me.

Central Valley agribusiness likes to argue that sending more water south is prioritizing "people before fish," since the sharp decline in delta smelt populations has been cited to block increased pumping. But the delta smelt are the canary in the coal mine. If they are suffering, more valued species like salmon and steelhead are, too. And it is very short-sighted (or ignorant) to not get that our won species cannot exist very long if the waterways of the world are dysfunctional and depleted.

Every scientific study of the Delta has yielded the same result: The only way to preserve its health and water quality is to allow more fresh water to run through it, not less.

We are at a VERY critical time in the history of humans, even if we live in a culture that is in denial about it. Thanks to habitat loss and ecological community destruction the world over, life on Earth is now undergoing the 6th known mass extinction. This is not a minor issue, and the fact that it wasn't even mentioned in the EIR is proof that this culture is asleep at the wheel, and unfortunately on a collision course with extinction. Given the grave situation, a sane culture would put an end to all land management that comes from the same thinking that created this mess. There would be a moratorium on development that requires sacrifice zones or wipes out great swathes of habitat, even if there aren't that many iconic species living there anymore.

And what about climate change? Why no mention of sea level rise? Maxwell is at 92' elevation, this reservoir would be what, 400'?

When Maxwell is underwater in 200-300 years, what good will these dams be? California will be in chaos long before that, and Sites will not help, only hurt, as the money could go to far wiser uses.

I am certain that many who support this project, if they are under 30, will come to regret the reservoir should it be built.

I have a better idea, one that is supported by lots of evidence but little scientific proof, since most science is funded by corporations who want to keep technology on the rise and wilderness under wraps.

What if the state of California, instead of spending 4 billion dollars on this, put that money into reforesting the vast annual grasslands to oak woodlands (or savannas where appropriate)?

Here are some rough figures just for Sites:

Purchase price for land (residents get to stay in their homes!): @\$1000/acre = \$14 million or a lot cheaper if you just pay the current owners to allow the work and monitoring to be done on their land

\$210 million dollars to plant 14,000 acres to blue oaks - benefit to hydrological cycle of 14,000 functional acres: short-term, not much, 100 years (when we will really need it!) very significant. I'm not a skilled researcher, but I know there is new science beginning to accurately quantify the benefits of woodlands to watersheds. You do the research--it is on you who wish to throw the precautionary principle out the window! If all of the Sacramento River basin were restored to oak woodlands, there is no human who will be alive in 100 years who'd not think we were brilliant for doing this. On the contrary, Sites will be another ugly project reminding those suffering in an impoverished and desertifying land that the last humans who could have made a difference chose the same old short-sighted path.

One last thing. I'm not a fan of mitigation--the action of reducing the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something. Try to look at this from the perspective of the millions of toads, lizards, snakes and insects who will drown. If you were in their shoes, would you think mitigation was acceptable?

Sadly,  
Brien Brennan  
Red Bluff, CA