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Public Meeting Regarding
SITES PROJECT DRAFT EIR/EIS
Thursday, December 7, 2017

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Reported by Vickey L. Benson, CSR No. 8076

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STATEMENT BY GLEN HOLSTEIN

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MR. HOLSTEIN: [Well, good evening, folks.

I'm Glen Holstein, a chapter botanist for the Sacramento Valley chapter of the California Native Plants Society, which is -- the Native Plants Society as a whole is a statewide nonpartisan membership group throughout all of California, made up of people that are brought together by one thing. They love our wonderful flora here in California, our plants.]

And you know, [I had a chance to look at the summary EIR for the first time tonight, just skimmed it through. And a couple of things stood out. It didn't look like there was any mention of a no project alternative.]

And another thing, too, [there was no mention of rare plants. Now, I know that there's probably mention of them, maybe, in all those volumes that you mentioned. But in the summary, apparently, they weren't important enough to include here.

And I know the Sites Valley is within the footprint of numerous rare plant species. And whether adequate plant surveys were done there, I don't know.

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18:51:08 1 Maybe in one of the volumes, it's hidden in there, and
18:51:11 2 I haven't had a chance to see it yet.
18:51:13 3 But as far as I know, there's been no
18:51:16 4 obvious, at least, discussion of what plant resources
18:51:19 5 may be there in Sites Valley right now that would be
18:51:23 6 impacted, you know, by this particular project.]

18:51:28 7 And you know, there are an awful lot of
18:51:31 8 conservation initiatives here in California, but they
18:51:35 9 tend to have one characteristic, and that is that they
18:51:38 10 tend to be in the hills and the mountains.

18:51:41 11 And the areas that are not there included are
18:51:47 12 California's valleys. And these valleys like Sites
18:51:51 13 Valley were identified by the World Wildlife Fund as
18:51:54 14 being among, if not the most critically endangered
18:51:59 15 ecosystem in all of north America.

18:52:03 16 So this is a pretty serious thing we're
18:52:06 17 contemplating here. This is a valley. And you know,
18:52:10 18 we talk about concern about sea level rise flooding
18:52:17 19 into the Central Valley and maybe impacting coastal
18:52:21 20 regions, coastal valleys.

18:52:24 21 But here we're talking about taking an
18:52:26 22 existing, pretty natural valley and deliberately
18:52:30 23 flooding it, taking away all the values that it has and
18:52:34 24 burying them under many, many feet of water.]

18:52:37 25 [Now, I used to do a lot of plant surveys, but

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18:52:41 1 I'm too gimpy to do them now. But I did go up into
18:52:45 2 Sites Valley, and I looked around a little bit.

18:52:47 3 And, you know, I don't just look at plants.
18:52:49 4 I look at bird life, too. And I've been -- I'm 77
18:52:53 5 years old. I've been looking at birds in California
18:52:56 6 for a long time.

18:52:58 7 [There's an interesting family of birds,
18:53:00 8 famous singers, that has the Skylark in it, for
18:53:04 9 example, called the Lark family. And there are
18:53:07 10 hundreds of species all through Africa, Europe, Asia.

18:53:11 11 But here in North America, we only have one
18:53:14 12 species. But it's a pretty special species, because of
18:53:17 13 all the Larks in the world, all these hundreds of Lark
18:53:20 14 species, it's by far the most beautiful.

18:53:23 15 And I've seen these -- it's called the Horned
18:53:26 16 Lark. And I've seen Horned Larks here and there in
18:53:30 17 California for many, many years, but never very many.

18:53:33 18 But when I went up to Sites Valley, I saw a
18:53:36 19 pretty remarkable thing. I saw a thousand times more
18:53:40 20 Horned Larks in just an hour in Sites Valley than I'd
18:53:44 21 seen in a whole lifetime of exploring California.

18:53:47 22 Now, I'm not claiming that the Horned Lark is
18:53:50 23 an endangered species or listed species. But you know,
18:53:54 24 common species can be threatened, too. The most
18:53:59 25 common, abundant bird in North America was the

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18:54:01 1 Passenger Pigeon, and it was one of the first to go
18:54:04 2 extinct.

18:54:05 3 There's thousands of caribou up on the north
18:54:08 4 slope of Alaska. There's concern because there's a
18:54:10 5 proposal to drill in the main part of their calving
18:54:14 6 ground that could impact this whole large population.

18:54:18 7 So to find this level of abundant life here
18:54:22 8 in this valley was pretty remarkable. And it may not
18:54:26 9 ever be captured in your environmental impact report,
18:54:30 10 even in all those volumes. But I think it's something
18:54:33 11 to be concerned about.

18:54:34 12 And there's an awful lot other things. I
18:54:36 13 don't know how adequate all your surveys were, but some
18:54:39 14 of these things need to be looked at, and they should
18:54:43 15 at least be mentioned in the summary.

18:54:45 16 As far as I could see, they're not mentioned
18:54:47 17 in the summary. If they exist at all, they're buried
18:54:50 18 in one of those volumes that most of us have not read
18:54:54 19 all the way through.

18:54:55 20 So looking at it as it is now, you have a
18:54:58 21 huge resource in this unflooded, beautiful Sites
18:55:04 22 Valley, one of those rare things. There aren't many
18:55:08 23 valleys like that in all of California.

18:55:10 24 And that valley, as far as I'm concerned,
18:55:12 25 unflooded, is worth a heck of a lot more than a dam.

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Thank you very much.]

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[STATEMENT BY LUCAS ROSS MERZ

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MR. MERZ: [Good evening. I want to talk to the public as well the board or the representatives up here, because one of the main reasons that we're having this meeting is because it's our tax dollars, right, that are going to pay for a lot of this project. And we're talking about the whole California spread of how we're going to fix this.

I don't want to echo all the concerns that Steve went over very eloquently. It's kind of been stated this document is knowingly inadequate because it had to meet a timeline. Right. They had to get the document done to qualify for funds from Proposition 1.

So a lot of these surveys and other things may not have been done in time or done adequately. So we're viewing a document that's going to need more work, and it's going to need a lot of engagement.]

At the same time, [we're talking about the Bay Delta water quality plan, updates and how we're going manage the delta. We're also working on the new conservation strategy, the flood planning update.

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