

Frequently Asked Questions: **Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement Certification**

1. What does it mean to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Sites Reservoir Project? Why does the Final EIR/EIS need to be certified?

Certification is an action taken by the lead agency indicating that the Final EIR has satisfied the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)'s requirements and reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis. As the lead agency for the EIR under CEQA, the Sites Project Authority must certify the Final EIR before taking any action to approve the Sites Reservoir Project.

The Bureau of Reclamation is the lead agency for the EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Bureau of Reclamation must separately decide whether to provide funding for the Project and whether to issue project agreements, such as a land lease and a water conveyance agreement.

In the case of Sites Reservoir, the EIR certification culminates years of stakeholder engagement and feedback, project modifications and efforts by project proponents to ensure Sites meets or exceeds all environmental requirements. It is one of the necessary and critical steps to moving the project forward.

2. What happens after the Final EIR/EIS is certified by the Sites Project Authority Board of Directors?

The Board of Directors must adopt the CEQA findings, a mitigation monitoring and reporting program, and a statement of overriding considerations for any impacts that cannot be mitigated to less than significant. The Sites Project Authority Board of Directors can then consider approval of the Project. If the Project is approved, the Sites Project Authority will file a Notice of Determination, which is a brief notice that a Project subject to the requirements of CEQA has been approved.

3. What are the next steps for the Sites Reservoir Project once the environmental review process is complete?

Once the environmental review process is complete and the Project is approved, the Sites Project Authority has the ability to implement the Project. For example, once the environmental review process is complete the Authority can begin purchasing land, conducting more design field investigations along with constructing and operating the Project. The Authority is currently working on the engineering design efforts and anticipates starting construction of the Project in 2026.