



For Immediate Release:

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Sites Project Authority Statement on Submitted Water Right Comments

Maxwell, CA – Today, the Sites Project Authority released the following statement related to its comments on the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) Administrative Hearings Office’s (AHO) Draft Decision and Permit for the Sites Reservoir Project (Project):

“The Authority appreciates that the AHO has tentatively determined in the draft permit that almost 1 million acre-feet of water is available to be appropriated from the Sacramento River for the Sites Reservoir Project. This is a major finding that paves the way for a successful Project. However, some of the proposed conditions for diversion and release of this water reflected in the draft permit greatly risk undermining the viability of the Project and need to be addressed before the AHO submits the proposed order to the State Board, currently scheduled for July 15, 2026.

Our comments, submitted on May 22, 2026, identify several Draft Permit conditions that, as currently written, would significantly constrain Project operations and materially reduce Project yield—without corresponding public or environmental benefit. The highest priority revisions we are requesting include:

- Clarifying the manner in which the yet to be adopted Bay-Delta Plan Update would be applied to the new Sites water right;
- Addressing technical and legal flaws in the AHO’s analysis related to conditions layered on top of the stringent regulatory determinations in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Incidental Take Permit for bypass flows that already limit diversions into Sites to protect migrating salmon;
- Clarifying the protections necessary to ensure the movement of Sites water through the Delta during the transfer window as non-Project water is consistent with the existing regulatory framework and recently issued State Board orders for other similar actions; and
- Ensuring available local runoff from Funks and Stone Corral Creeks into Sites is secured for uses solely within the Colusa County and Glenn County areas.

At this stage in the process, we are confident there is a clear pathway to a successful Project and a workable final adopted permit. However, to achieve this important outcome, the AHO and State Board need to make necessary revisions to the Draft Permit to ensure the Project remains feasible, affordable, and capable of delivering the benefits it is designed to provide.

An important part of this Project is the statewide public benefits. Californians overwhelmingly approved Proposition 1 in 2014 because they understood the need for new water storage, environmental stewardship, and long-term drought resilience. Since that time, the need has only intensified. Climate volatility, prolonged droughts, increasingly intense storm events, and growing uncertainty surrounding future Colorado River allocations are placing unprecedented pressure on California’s water system.

We respectfully urge the AHO and State Board to consider our and others’ comments to revise the Draft Decision and Permit to better reflect the extensive record developed through this proceeding, the Project’s demonstrated public benefits, and the state’s responsibility to balance all beneficial uses of water in the public interest.

With these necessary revisions, we remain committed to ensuring that Sites Reservoir fulfills its promise as a 21st century storage solution providing a generational investment in California’s water future.”

Sites Reservoir is a 1.5 million acre-foot, off-stream reservoir proposed north of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta that would improve California’s water reliability and resiliency in drier years for farms, families, fish, and fowl. The Project is backed by a broad coalition of cities, counties, water agencies, and irrigation districts across California, as well as the State of California through the Water Storage Investment Program and the federal government under the 2016 Water Infrastructure and Investment for the Nation Act. Additional information can be found at www.sitesproject.org or on Facebook, Instagram, and X at @SitesProject.