

SITES RESERVOIR

A Bad Solution to the Wrong Problem

California has an environmental crisis, not a water supply crisis.

A century and a half of unsustainable water management, exacerbated by the growing challenge of climate change, has created a crisis for California's river ecosystems, water quality, and access to clean, affordable water for all communities.

Instead of addressing the root causes, Governor Newsom and water districts are fast-tracking the proposed Sites Reservoir, claiming that it's a solution to the state's water supply and climate change challenges.

There's a long list of reasons why this project is a boondoggle. It's a relic of the past rather than a signpost for the future, and should not move forward.

OVERVIEW

- Sites won't improve water supply
- Sites won't foster climate resilience
- Sites will harm the environment
- Sites is not equitable
- Sites is a taxpayer boondoggle
- Sites is not near the finish line



SITES WON'T HELP THE CLIMATE OR IMPROVE WATER SUPPLY

Californians should be leading the way in creating "green infrastructure" that is designed to meet the needs of all Californians in the changing climate of the 21st century. Instead, the Sites project:

- ◆ **Exacerbates climate change:** Annual greenhouse gas emissions from the reservoir would be equal to adding 80,000 cars to the road, undermining compliance with the state's climate goals.
- ◆ **Does little to increase water supply or reliability:** On average, Sites would add less than 1% to water supply, and could be as little as 1/10 of 1% as operational rules change over time.
- ◆ **"Big Gulps" alone won't fill the reservoir:** Sites is touted as an innovative approach that only takes flood water. But Sites would have to run its pumps for nearly six months straight to fill the reservoir, through wet times and dry.
- ◆ **Takes Sacramento River water during critical times:** During spring and fall, the Bay-Delta ecosystem, and numerous species at record or near record low population levels, desperately need more flows to survive. During the winter, high flow is needed to naturally flush debris and toxins from the system.



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SITES WILL HARM THE ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE

Tribes and disadvantaged communities, who have historically been excluded from decision-making, have not been adequately consulted in the process to date. Further, Sites backers describe it as an environmentally friendly project, however, it would cause environmental harms, including:

- ◆ **Reduced flow and habitat for salmon and other species**, increasing water temperatures, interfering with migration, and degrading downstream habitat and water quality.
- ◆ **Increased levels of mercury and toxic algae** in the reservoir and in the Sacramento River. Offstream storage is pushed as less damaging to the environment, but evaporation, warming, methylation of mercury and toxic algae growth will be even greater problems in the shallow Sites Reservoir than in other projects.
- ◆ **Fragmented riparian and wetland habitat**.

SITES WILL COST TAXPAYERS & REWARD SPECULATORS

Sites is projected to cost at least \$4.8 billion dollars. US taxpayers will fund 9% and loan up to 49% of the \$4.8 billion needed to construct the reservoir. California taxpayers will pay for 18% of project costs.

- ◆ The costs to water agencies for investing in **Sites will likely impede critical investments in more reliable and less expensive alternatives** such as conservation, recycling and stormwater capture.
- ◆ **Sites water will be expensive for agriculture**. Sites water is estimated to cost at least \$850 an acre-foot. Cost of Sites water will likely exceed gross revenue received from growing rice, especially during dry times.
- ◆ In past droughts, cost of water has risen to 10x compared with wet times. **Sites investors will not pay 100% of the costs for that water, but will reap 100% of the profits from selling it during droughts**.

FURTHER READING

Sites Reservoir is not a Silver Bullet.
Here's Why. ([link](#))

CSPA, FOR et al. Protest of Sites Water Right ([link](#))

