

Working Draft– For Discussion Purposes Only

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION**  
**Environmental Impact Report**  
**for the Sites Reservoir Project**

month day, 2016

**INTRODUCTION**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Department of water Resources (DWR) published a Notice of Preparation for the North of Delta Offstream Storage (NODOS) project in October 2001. That NOP identified DWR as the CEQA lead agency and did not identify specific responsible or cooperating agencies to participate in preparation of the EIR/EIS. However, the NOP identified entities that participated in a 2000 Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the proposed Project, including:

- Federal Agencies (Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS], Western Area Power Administration).
- State Agencies (DWR, Department of Fish and Wildlife).
- Local Partners (County of Colusa, Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, Maxwell Irrigation District, Natomas Mutual Water Company, Orland Unit Water User's Association, Princeton-Codora-Glenn Irrigation District, Provident Irrigation District, Reclamation District No. 108, Sutter Mutual Water Company, Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District).

More than a decade has passed and much effort has been expended to better define and characterize the NODOS project - without the circulation of a draft EIR. The Sites Project Authority (Authority) was formed in August 2010 to pursue the development and operation of the Sites Reservoir Project. Following the passage of Proposition 1 in 2014, the involved agencies have refined the goals and objectives of the project and added a new alternative intended to better fit the intent of the Proposition 1, Chapter 8, the Water Supply Investment Program, and the various water needs of the Sacramento Valley, including the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta. As such the Authority will be the Lead Agency will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Sites Project (proposed project). As more fully discussed below, this proposed project would provide offstream storage to provide direct and real benefits to instream flows, the Delta ecosystem, and water supply.

**BACKGROUND**

The Sites Project Authority (Authority) was formed on August 26, 2010 when seven regional entities, including several local water agencies and Counties, executed the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement. The primary purpose of the Authority, as stated in the agreement, is to pursue the development and operation of the Sites Reservoir Project, which has long been viewed as an ideal location for additional offstream storage to provide direct and real benefits to instream flows, the Delta ecosystem, and water supply. In keeping their commitment to move the project forward on behalf of the region, the Authority has spent the last six years working towards this goal by engaging

the public, various stakeholders, state and federal agencies and landowners, initiating the required environmental planning process, and conducting feasibility studies, among other efforts. The Authority is governed by a board of directors that works in close coordination with other groups in the region interested in eventual construction and operation of the Sites Reservoir Project.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The need for a reservoir to reduce flood damage in the Sacramento Valley and provide better optimized water supplies some or all of the functions of the Project in Northern California has been identified for more than 100 years ago. These goals and objectives of related potential projects have been refined by the US Geological Survey, DWR, US Bureau of Reclamation and the US Army Corps of Engineers. The potential locations and operations of offstream storage to be located in the western foothills of the Sacramento Valley were identified prior to the CALFED Program. Building on all of these prior efforts the Sites Project objectives are:

- Improve water supply reliability for local Sacramento Valley uses as well as statewide agricultural, urban, and environmental uses.
- Increase survival of anadromous and endemic fish populations.
- Improve environmental and water quality in the Delta.
- Provide flexible hydropower generation to support integration of renewable energy sources.

Secondary objectives for the proposed Project were identified as:

- Develop additional recreation opportunities.
- Provide incremental flood damage reduction opportunities.
- Develop operational flexibility.

## **PROJECT AREA**

The proposed Sites Reservoir would be located in Antelope Valley, approximately 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell, in both Glenn and Colusa counties. Other proposed Project facilities would be located in Tehama, Glenn, or Colusa counties. See Figure 1 and Figure 2.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Sites Project would consist of a new offstream storage reservoir with two main dams, up to nine saddle dams, and up to three recreation areas. The reservoir would have an associated inlet/outlet structure and would be connected to the Sacramento River by two existing screened diversions and associated canals (TCCA and GCID facilities), as well as a new screened diversion and associated pipeline (Delevan Pipeline). Water conveyance between the reservoir and the canals and pipeline would be facilitated by two new regulating reservoirs and their associated pumping/generating plants. New transmission lines would connect the pumping/generating plants and their associated electrical switchyards to existing transmission lines in the proposed Project area. New roads and a bridge would be constructed to provide access to the proposed Project facilities and over the proposed reservoir, and some existing roads would be relocated or

improved. The proposed Project would require modifications to an existing canal and pumping plant.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15125 states that an EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the NOP is published from local, regional, and, in this case, state perspectives (existing conditions). The environmental setting will constitute the baseline physical conditions that the Authority, the Lead Agency, will use to determine whether an impact is significant. In general, the environmental baseline is the same as existing conditions.

## **PROJECT ALTERNATIVES**

Project alternatives, in addition to the no project alternative, will be developed following the scoping process and will consider the views of agencies and the public.

## **POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

The EIR will analyze resources that may be affected by the proposed project. Resource topics to be considered in the EIR include, but may not be limited to:

- aesthetics
- agriculture and forestry resources
- air quality
- biological resources
- cultural resources
- geology and soils
- greenhouse gas emissions
- hazards and hazardous materials
- hydrology and water quality
- land use and planning
- mineral resources
- noise
- population and housing
- public services
- recreation
- transportation/traffic
- utilities and service systems.

## **SCOPING MEETINGS**

Two scoping meetings will be held on December XX, 2016 in the Authority office, 122 Old Hwy 99W, Maxwell, CA 95955 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm and from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

The scoping meetings will include a brief presentation about the proposed project at the beginning of the meeting with time for public comments on the content and scope of the EIR to follow.

## **WRITTEN COMMENTS**

This NOP is being circulated to obtain suggestions and information from interested parties, including responsible and/or trustee agencies and members of the public on the content and scope of issues that may be addressed in the EIR. Written comments from interested parties are invited to ensure that the full range of issues related to implementation of the proposed project is identified early in the CEQA process. Agencies and organizations should provide a contact name

and information in their letters. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public. The Authority will post NOP comment letters in their entirety on the Authority web page for the proposed project at <http://www.SitesProject.com/>.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15082(b)(1)(8), within 30 days of receiving the NOP, responsible and trustee agencies shall provide the Authority with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the Draft EIR related to their area of statutory responsibility. Comments from individual respondents, including names and home addresses of respondents, will be made available for public review. You may request the Authority withhold your contact information from public disclosure, which will be honored to the extent allowable under California law. If you wish the Authority to consider withholding this information, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments.

Written comments on the scope of the EIR are due no later than 5:00 pm on December XX, 2016. All comments or questions about the environmental review process should be mailed to:

Robert Thomson  
Sites Project Authority  
122 Old Hwy 99W.  
Maxwell, CA 95955

or e-mailed to [xxx@sitesproject.org](mailto:xxx@sitesproject.org). Additional information on the proposed project can be found on the Sites Project Authority web page at the link for the proposed project provided above.

Date:

Signature:

Title:

DRAFT