



2020 Progress Report

Despite all of its challenges, 2020 was a pivotal year for the Sites Reservoir Project. New plans were unveiled in the form of a “right-sized” project after a comprehensive Value Planning process. The Sites Project Authority brought on a new executive director. And the year was bookended by major federal investments and advancements in the project that underscore the significance of Sites Reservoir as a joint local-state-federal project that benefits Californians statewide.

The important successes and progress made in 2020 lays the foundation for the affordable, permittable and buildable project the Sites Project Authority is advancing in 2021.

Located 10 miles west of the town of Maxwell in rural Glenn and Colusa counties, Sites Reservoir would be an off-stream storage facility that captures and stores stormwater flows in the Sacramento River for release in dry and critical years for environmental use and for California communities, farms and businesses when it is so desperately needed. It is a modern, once-in-a-generation water project that will support California for decades to come by shoring up a reliable source of water for people and the environment.

The good news is, significant benefits can be possible if Sites Reservoir becomes a reality, including:



Off-stream Storage

Does not create a barrier to native fish migration



Cooperative Operation

Increases effectiveness and efficiency of existing water storage infrastructure



Federal and State Agencies Manage Environmental Water

Adaptable to current and future conditions and priorities



Adaptable to Climate Change

Contributes to system reliability and performance with climate change



Local Leadership and Cooperation

Aligns with Sacramento Valley's values and fosters regional and statewide collaboration



Dry Year Water Supply

Reliable dry year water supply for California communities, farms and businesses



Recreational Opportunities

Provides northern Sacramento Valley with additional opportunities for recreation



Environmental Support

Provides environmental water in drier periods for native fish, and habitat for native species and birds

AFFORDABLE

Continued Partnership between the Authority and California

The Authority maximized funding from its Early Funding Agreement with the California Water Commission to fund over 90% of the work done between January and August. The partnership with the state results in cost sharing for the development of public benefits and allows participant money to go further, as well as providing much needed flexibility in 2020. **OUTCOME: The Authority continues to advance the state's Proposition 1, Water Storage Investment Program objectives through the Early Funding Agreement.**

Secured Flexible Cash Calls

Responsible management of expenses and funding were critical to maintaining the schedule in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing for the first cash call of Amendment 2 (September 2020 – December 2021) to be delayed by two months, giving flexibility to member agencies. Members are committed to advancing the project, even through challenging and uncertain times. **OUTCOME: Continued participation by all investors, plus the addition to two new investors in 2020, for a total of 23 investor agencies.**

Continued Federal Funding

In August, the Authority worked with Bureau of Reclamation staff to execute a Financial Assistance Agreement to leverage Congressionally appropriated funds authorized through the WIIN Act. This \$6 million agreement consists of a 50% cost share between the Authority and Bureau of Reclamation. In December, an additional \$13.7 million was appropriated under the WIIN Act, representing a significant federal commitment to the advancement of Sites. **OUTCOME: The Authority is working with Bureau of Reclamation to use WIIN Act funds to advance environmental planning and permitting efforts through December 2021.**

Developed Project Financing Action Plan

In October, as a key component of the strategic plan, the Authority approved a Project Financing Action Plan to define the approach, schedule, and resources to develop a Plan of Finance, Successor Agreement/Work Plan, and a Storage and Supply Services Term Sheet. **OUTCOME: The Authority is committed to developing an approach to continually fund the project that works for all participants.**

BUILDABLE

Initiated Feasibility Design

The Authority performed focused geotechnical investigations in March, and on-boarded engineering design firms in April to further develop the feasibility design and improve cost certainty. **OUTCOME: Sites is advancing the necessary technical studies to support the Water Commission's Feasibility Determination and improve cost certainty.**

Completed Value Planning

The Authority conducted a value planning effort to review the proposed operations and facilities, evaluating multiple alternatives and ultimately selecting a preferred project that is permittable and affordable while significantly driving down costs. **OUTCOME: Sites Reservoir is a right-sized project that will provide water supply reliability today and in the future and resulted in savings over \$2 billion.**

PERMITTABLE

Initiated Revised Draft Environmental Document

As an outcome of the value planning process and coordination with Bureau of Reclamation, the Authority initiated a Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) to address project changes. **OUTCOME: The Authority is preparing documentation to provide details regarding potential environmental impacts and conducting operations modeling to establish protective conditions for spawning salmon.**

Prepared Key State and Federal Environmental Permits

The Authority continued discussions with state and federal resource agencies to advance several key permit applications which are anticipated to be submitted in 2021. **OUTCOME: The Authority is working to advance key federal and state permits for the project.**

Developed Preliminary Project Description

The Authority developed a preliminary project description that supports the preferred project for the environmental analysis, consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). **OUTCOME: The preliminary project description designation represents a right-sized project and is consistent with CEQA.**

EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

Conducted Strategic Planning

In 2020 the Sites Project Authority and its participants conducted a strategic planning process to assess the opportunities and challenges ahead. **OUTCOME: The 2020 Strategic Plan was developed to make Sites more affordable, permittable and buildable. The Authority also reaffirmed and defined its mission, vision and values.**

Hosted Town Hall Meetings

In July, the Authority hosted two virtual town hall meetings to provide a project overview for landowners, community members, conservation organizations, and the public. **OUTCOME: The Authority continues its commitment to keep its partners and stakeholders informed of project progress.**

Named in Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio

Sites Reservoir was named within the State's Final Water Resilience Portfolio, released in July. The portfolio assesses and recommends local and regional strategies and actions to help California adapt to a changing climate and increased environmental stressors. **OUTCOME: Sites Reservoir embodies the future needs of California's water supply and is supported by state leaders.**

Held Consultations with Native American Tribes and Conservation Organizations

The Authority held coordination meetings with representatives from Native American Tribes including the Colusa Indian Community Council of the Cachiil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians and the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation as part of the CEQA process. Outreach efforts continued with NGO groups, with many meetings held to discuss the project and receive input. **OUTCOME: The Authority maintained important partnerships with tribes and conservation organizations.**