

The following questions and answers are meant to respond to common questions about Sites Reservoir.

### 1. Why has it taken so much time to get Sites to the finish line?

Sites has been around for decades with efforts originally being led by the California Department of Water Resources and the Bureau of Reclamation. The Project had starts and stops, as we typically see of a large project led by the state or federal government. The Sites Project Authority was formed in 2010 to move the Project more expeditiously. Big projects take time and careful consideration, and the Authority has done that over the last decade and will continue into the future. Sites Reservoir is anticipated to be operational by the end of this decade, around 2030. The Authority has made great strides over the last two years to “right-size” the Project for affordability and permitability, two critical success factors. This represents a huge milestone for Project advancement and sets a turning point that makes the Project more feasible and more likely to be built than ever before.

### 2. Why does this project make sense now, after 60 years?

Many aspects of water management in California have changed in the recent decade that put the Sites Reservoir on the fast track to completion. These changes include the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, the continued declining reliability of the state and federal water projects, increasing regulatory changes requiring diversification of water purveyors’ water portfolios, and the need for water resiliency to address the inevitable uncertainty of our changing climate. Additionally, never before has California had a means to invest in storing water for the environment which was made possible with the overwhelming voter passage in 2014 of Proposition 1 making \$2.7B available for public benefits of water storage. Approximately 18% of Sites Reservoir is dedicated to delivering water for the environmental purposes as a result of Proposition 1 funds which, for the first time, creates an asset California’s regulators can use to adaptively manage for the benefit of fish and wildlife.

### 3. In hindsight, should this project have been built when originally contemplated, and if so what would be different today?

Hindsight is always 20/20 and if Sites had been built decades ago the added flexibility it would have created would have been very beneficial for California water management over the years. From a more recent perspective, if California had Sites Reservoir in a dry year like 2021 it is estimated there would be close to 1 million acre-feet of additional water supplies available for farms, cities and the environment. Sites Reservoir diverts water in wet periods and stores that water for use in the drier times.



#### **4. Is this reservoir a stand-alone, or does it work with other regional reservoirs?**

Sites Reservoir is uniquely located in relation to other major components of the state and federal water projects like Shasta Lake, Lake Oroville and Folsom Lake. Sites is complementary to these existing crucial elements of statewide water management and could act to extend the functions they serve by creating flexibility to adapt to changing river and Delta management conditions. For example, Sites can be operated in coordination with Shasta Lake to preserve and enhance cold water for endangered salmon in the Sacramento River. Or Sites could contribute to the increased fresh-water flow into the Delta during drier periods to assist with salinity management of this critical estuary. Sites would not compete for the water resources stored in these state and federal facilities but would increase the total amount of managed water in storage. With all of the uncertainty California water managers face in the next century, having the Sites Reservoir is a necessity for statewide water management.

#### **5. How will this project utilize and capitalize on existing infrastructure and what does that mean for the project footprint?**

Extending the performance of existing infrastructure is good public policy, good business practice and makes for a more sustainable footprint by reducing the environmental impact of the constructed work. The Project will utilize existing facilities and infrastructure to a great extent and the existing topography of the reservoir site itself is a natural bowl perfectly situated to accommodate a water reservoir. A significant portion of the 100+ miles of conveyance (canals and pipelines) involved in the Project will be existing facilities. The only new conveyance envisioned is the inlet/outlet works for the reservoir and the four miles of 10-foot diameter pipeline to convey water back to the Sacramento River between the Tehama-Colusa Canal and the Colusa Basin Drain.

#### **6. A recent UC Davis study finds that river management for species protection based on simple temperature targets may not be effective and questions the feasibility of federal investment in new dams that claim to assist in temperature efforts. Does this mean Sites is not worthy of federal investment?**

All species have varying needs throughout their lives. Suitable water temperatures for our cold-water fish are important but not the only important component. They need food to sustain and grow along with places to take cover and rest while migrating to the ocean among other things. While temperature management alone does not meet all of the needs of our cold-water fish, it is an important component. Sites has been shown to have the ability to assist in the Bureau of Reclamation's temperature management efforts for salmon protection in the Sacramento and American River systems through water exchanges. The Bureau of Reclamation would establish the criteria for these exchanges through its temperature management planning which weighs risks and rewards of various potential protective actions.

Sites is a potential tool for use in managing temperature but is not limited to serving this purpose only. Sites provides additional benefits to the environment, including assisting in providing stability for flows in the fall to reduce salmon redd dewatering, providing additional food resources for Delta smelt in the north Delta, among other existing and potential benefits. It would be shortsighted to conclude that the federal government should not invest in Sites based on conclusions about current temperature management efforts being less than optimal. The simple fact is that Sites creates new water supply for drier periods and flexibility to deal with uncertainty of climate change. Both of these attributes are beneficial to the environment and worthy of federal investment no matter how you look at it.

