

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

**1. Is Sites Reservoir diverting water from the Sacramento River during dry and critically dry years?**

Yes, even during drier years there can be significant precipitation events that present conditions where water can be diverted safely from the river and placed in Sites Reservoir. All diversions will be subject to the highly protective operating conditions that are currently being proposed for the Sites Reservoir Project.

**2. Will Sites Reservoir decrease Delta flows?**

Yes, slightly, when the Project is diverting. However, since the Sites Reservoir diversions occur only when there are high river flows, any reduction to Delta flows would be minor and would not impact any of the beneficial uses of the water in the Delta. Storing water in Sites Reservoir during times when there is a lot of flow in the Sacramento River for use during times with the flows are low, including during drought periods, is part of the statewide strategy for adapting to changing climate conditions and to return much needed flexibility to our statewide water management system.

**3. Have concerns about the impact of Sites Reservoir operations on the environment been addressed in the current proposal?**

The Project operations have been modified substantially over the last two years to be more protective of the environment. These modifications have reduced the Project diversions from the Sacramento River substantially, in fact diversions have been reduced almost in half, as compared to the criteria proposed in 2017. The current Project operations strikes the needed balance between environmental protections and Project affordability that has to exist for the Project to proceed.

**4. Does Sites Reservoir threaten salmon and other fish in the Sacramento River and Bay-Delta?**

No, due to the highly protective operating conditions being proposed that must be in place before diversions into Sites Reservoir can proceed, including managing adaptively to evolving conditions, Sites Reservoir does not threaten salmon and other fish. Also, the intakes being used for diverting water into Sites Reservoir include state of the art fish screens that are proven to be highly effective at protecting fish.

**5. Has the Sites Project Authority analyzed and considered a comprehensive range of environmental mitigation and protections to support salmon and the Bay-Delta ecosystem?**

Absolutely, and there are a couple of specific elements of the Project that are critical to supporting environmental needs. First, the State has made a large investment in the Project through Proposition 1 to enhance their ability to support these critical systems. Second, there are opportunities to partner with the State and Federal water projects in coordinated operations that will enhance fishery protections associated with their operations. Beyond these enhancements, the Project itself is being designed to avoid and lessen any environmental concerns and, when necessary, provide appropriate mitigation.



## **6. Will Sites Reservoir meaningfully address future droughts?**

Sites Reservoir is an insurance policy for future droughts. Sites Reservoir does not rely on snowpack and if the scientific projections are correct about the impacts of climate change (i.e. California is expected to receive about the same annual precipitation that it currently does but more will come as rain than snow), then having Sites Reservoir will mean we can collect more water in the reservoir for use during future droughts.

## **7. It has been stated that if operational today, Sites Reservoir would have 1 million acre-feet (MAF) of water in 2021. How much would be diverted in 2021?**

Zero diversions into the reservoir in 2021 would have occurred if Sites Reservoir would have been in place. This is in accordance with the highly protective operating conditions that are currently being proposed for the Project. However, the 1 MAF estimate that would have already been stored as result of the wetter years in 2017 and 2019 is the water that would be available today. And if 2022 is another dry year it is estimated there could be approximately 400,000 acre-feet of that left in Sites. This water is badly needed addition to a severely depleted water supply system that was not built to address future climate.

## **8. Is Sites Reservoir compliant with Proposition 1?**

Even with the Project changes that have occurred since the original award in 2018, the Sites Reservoir Project continues to provide the public benefits the California Water Commission conditionally approved for the Project in State Proposition 1 funding in 2018. The Project meets the conditions Proposition 1 says have to be met by January 1, 2022, and Sites continues to meet all the feasibility requirements for investment by the State.

## **9. How does the cost of water from Sites compare to other sources during dry years?**

The Sites Reservoir compares favorably to other dry year water supply alternatives which improves water affordability for Project participants and the 24 million users they serve, including disadvantaged communities. With water being one of California's most scarce and valuable resources, it is essential to develop a diverse portfolio of sustainable water supply solutions. But it is equally important for decision-makers and stakeholders to evaluate the most cost-effective options available to maximize the value of these investments. The Project has been designed to put the state's limited water resources to the best use in an affordable, flexible, and sustainable way.

## **10. How can member agencies be assured that there will be water in Sites Reservoir if they are paying for storage?**

Sites Reservoir is a beneficiary pays project, which means that the benefits of the project go to those paying. Each participant has control over their portion of the storage space and a proportionate share of the water diverted into Sites Reservoir. There is flexibility in the timing and uses of the water, including for the environment. The assurance of water being in the reservoir is largely the result of the individual participant decisions in their operations of their portion of the facility. This way, each member is assured of getting what it pays for in a way that works within and complements that member's water supply portfolio.

