

## Introduction

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Sites Project Authority (Authority) and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) have prepared a Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIR/SDEIS) to analyze the potential environmental impacts of construction and operation of the Sites Reservoir Project (Project).

The Authority would construct an offstream reservoir to capture excess water from major storms and store the water until it is most needed during dry periods. These saved water supplies would be used for the environment, people, and farms. Existing water storage facilities were designed to capture snowmelt, but precipitation in present-day California occurs more commonly in the form of rain. This trend is likely to continue in climate change conditions. The state's demand for water to serve communities, fuel the economy, and revitalize the environment has increased far beyond what the existing water storage system was designed to support. The Project is one tool in a toolbox of actions to assist the state in achieving the goals of water supply reliability for all users (including the environment) and adaptation to a changing climate.

The RDEIR/SDEIS includes a complete revision of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) released in 2017 to reflect changes to the Project that have occurred since the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS. The Authority and Reclamation considered all public comments received on the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS in developing the refined alternatives and environmental impact analyses presented in the RDEIR/SDEIS.

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### **The RDEIR/SDEIS contains a large volume of information and complex analyses. This community guide is intended to provide an overview of key elements of the environmental analysis provided in the RDEIR/SDEIS.**

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The 2017 Draft EIR/EIS evaluated four surface water reservoir size and conveyance alternatives. Each alternative included a reservoir to be filled using existing Sacramento River diversion facilities and a new Delevan Pipeline on the Sacramento River. In October 2019, the Authority initiated a value planning process to identify and evaluate additional alternatives that could make the Project more affordable for the Sites Storage Partners while also addressing comments

received on the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS. Value planning process objectives included: (1) improving water supply and water supply reliability; (2) providing incremental Level 4 water supply for refuges; (3) improving the survival of anadromous fish; and (4) enhancing the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta (Delta) ecosystem. Secondary objectives of the value planning process were to provide opportunities for flood damage reduction and recreation.

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The value planning process resulted in three new alternatives, which include reservoir sizes from 1.3 to 1.5 million acre-feet and focus on using existing facilities to the extent practical for diversions to and releases from the reservoir. The RDEIR/SDEIS evaluates the potential environmental effects of these three new alternatives, as well as a No Project/No Action Alternative.

**Some key differences in the facilities and operational characteristics between the alternatives evaluated in this RDEIR/SDEIS (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) and the alternatives evaluated in the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS include, but are not limited to:**

- **Elimination of the Delevan Facility on the Sacramento River and conveyance pipeline**
- **Elimination of Hothouse Reservoir and existing transmission line realignments**
- **Elimination of dedicated pump/generation hydropower facilities**
- **Fewer saddle dams**
- **New conveyance facilities**
- **New flow operations**

Additional information about the differences between the alternatives can be found in Appendix 2B, *Additional Alternatives Screening and Evaluation*.

### Primary Characteristics of Project Alternatives

Project Element	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Reservoir Size	1.5 million acre-feet (MAF)	1.3 MAF	Same as Alternative 1
Inundation Area	13,200 acres	12,600 acres	Same as Alternative 1
Dams (scaled to the size of the reservoir)	Golden Gate and Sites Dams; 7 saddle dams; 2 saddle dikes	Golden Gate and Sites Dams; 4 saddle dams; 3 saddle dikes	Same as Alternative 1
Route Connecting East and West Sides of Reservoir	Permanent bridge crossing the reservoir	Paved roadway along south side of reservoir	Same as Alternative 1
Regulating Reservoirs	Funks Reservoir, Terminal Regulating Reservoir (TRR) East	Funks Reservoir, TRR West	Same as Alternative 1
Conveyance Releases	Releases 1,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) into new Dunnigan Pipeline discharging into the Colusa Basin Drain (CBD)	Releases of up to 1,000 cfs into new Dunnigan Pipeline discharging into the Sacramento River with an average of 300 cfs partial discharge into the CBD	Same as Alternative 1
Releases into Funks Creek and Stone Corral Creek	Specific flow criteria to maintain flows to protect downstream water right holders and ecological function	Same as Alternative 1	Same as Alternative 1
Bureau of Reclamation Involvement	Two options: Operational exchanges <sup>1</sup> only (Alternative 1A); or Funding partner (up to 7% investment) with operational exchanges <sup>1</sup> (Alternative 1B)	Operational exchanges <sup>1</sup> only	Funding partner (up to 25% investment) with operational exchanges <sup>1</sup>
California Department of Water Resources Involvement	Operational exchanges with Oroville and use of State Water Project facilities South-of-Delta	Similar to Alternative 1 (volumes may vary, however)	Similar to Alternative 1 (volumes may vary, however)

<sup>1</sup>Operational exchanges could include within-year exchanges and real-time exchanges.

# Contents of the RDEIR/SDEIS

The focus of the RDEIR/SDEIS is the analysis of the impacts the Project may have on specific environmental resource areas and the mitigation measures that would reduce significant impacts. This analysis, which is presented in Chapters 5 through 30 of the RDEIR/SDEIS, includes a description of the existing environmental setting, methods of analysis, discussion of the impact findings, and discussion of the mitigation measures.

There are several additional discussions in the RDEIR/SDEIS that are important to providing a full description of the Project and its potential impacts. These discussions include:

- **Project Description and Alternatives, Chapter 2:** detailed discussion of the Project and alternatives analyzed, including objectives/purpose and need, location, components, construction, and operations and maintenance.
- **Environmental Analysis, Chapter 3:** terminology, organization, and approach to environmental impact analysis.
- **Regulatory Compliance, Chapter 4:** overview of applicable regulations, as well as the federal, state, and local approvals needed.
- **Climate Change, Chapter 28:** overview of the effects of climate change on the Project.
- **Cumulative Impacts, Chapter 31:** Project impacts (large or small) which, when combined with impacts of other closely related past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects, contribute substantially to a collectively significant impact.
- **Other Required Analyses, Chapter 32:** additional environmental analyses required under CEQA and NEPA.

Additional technical appendices, figures, and tables included in the RDEIR/SDEIS are designed to help support the analysis.

## Summary of Potential Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The RDEIR/SDEIS includes an analysis of the Project's potential impacts on a range of environmental resource areas. A summary of the impacts requiring mitigation as well as the potentially significant and unavoidable impacts/adverse or substantially adverse effects are listed on the next page. No mitigation measures are required when an impact is determined to be beneficial or less than significant.

The full list of the environmental resource areas addressed can be found in the Executive Summary (Table ES-2) of the RDEIR/SDEIS.

Environmental impacts associated with the following resource areas would be less than significant (chapter number in parentheses): Surface Water Resources (5); Fluvial Geomorphology (7); Groundwater Resources (8); Minerals (13); Recreation Resources (16); Energy (17); Noise (19); Population and Housing (25); Public Services and Utilities (26); and Public Health and Environmental Hazards (27).

# Commenting on the RDEIR/SDEIS

Comments should be limited to the environmental analysis in this RDEIR/SDEIS and not the prior 2017 Draft EIR/EIS. Although the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS was circulated for public review and comment, the RDEIR/SDEIS has been substantially revised and recirculated in its entirety; prior comments submitted on the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS do not require a response under CEQA. Reclamation will respond to comments submitted on the 2017 Draft EIR/EIS and this RDEIR/SDEIS in the Final EIR/EIS under NEPA.

All comments on the RDEIR/SDEIS must be postmarked or received by 5 p.m. PST on Jan. 11, 2022. Visit [sitesproject.org/environmental-review](http://sitesproject.org/environmental-review) for how to submit comments.



Resource Area (Chapter Number)	Impacts Requiring Mitigation	Significant & Unavoidable Impacts/Adverse & Substantial Effects
Surface Water Quality (6)	All Alternatives – Increased methylmercury concentrations downstream of Sites Reservoir during construction and operation; metal concentrations and effects in Stone Corral Creek during operation; metal and pesticide concentrations and effects in Yolo Bypass during operation	All Alternatives – Increased methylmercury concentrations downstream of Sites Reservoir during construction and operation; minimize metal concentrations and effects in Stone Corral Creek during operation to the extent feasible; minimize metal and pesticide concentrations and effects in Yolo Bypass during operation to the extent feasible
Vegetation and Wetland Resources (9)	All Alternatives – Construction effects on special-status plant species, wetlands, and potential conflicts with Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)/Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP); operational effects on special-status plant species, riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community, and wetlands	All Alternatives – Construction related effects on oak woodlands, primarily in the reservoir inundation area
Wildlife Resources (10)	All Alternatives – Construction effects on special-status wildlife species, potential conflicts with local policies and HCPs/NCCPs, interference with movement of species/wildlife corridors; operational effects due to use of pesticides and herbicides, interference with movement of species/wildlife corridors	All Alternatives – Interference with movement of native or migratory wildlife species or with established wildlife corridors; loss of nesting tree habitat for golden eagles
Aquatic Biological Resources (11)	All Alternatives – Construction effects on fish and aquatic biological resources; operations effects on winter-run, spring-run, fall-run/late fall-run chinook salmon and central valley steelhead; operations effects on longfin smelt and delta smelt	Less than significant with mitigation
Geology and Soils (12)	All Alternatives – Construction effects on paleontological resources	Alternatives 1 & 3 – Paleontological resource impacts due to construction method for TRR East
Land Use (14)	Alternative 2 – No feasible mitigation identified to address South Road physically dividing Lodoga and Maxwell	Alternative 2 – South Road physically divides Lodoga and Maxwell
Agriculture and Forestry Resources (15)	All Alternatives – Permanent conversion of farmlands and Williamson Act lands	All Alternatives – Permanent conversion of farmland and Williamson Act Lands
Navigation, Transportation, and Traffic (18)	Alternative 2 – No feasible mitigation identified to address increase in school bus travel time between Maxwell and Lodoga	Alternative 2 – South Road would substantially increase school bus travel time between Maxwell and Lodoga
Air Quality (20)	All Alternatives – Increase in criteria pollutant for which region is nonattainment during construction; recreational boat emissions during operation; expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations	All Alternatives – Increase in criteria pollutant for which region is nonattainment during construction and exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations during construction and operation
Greenhouse Gas Emissions (21)	All Alternatives – Generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but would achieve net-zero emissions through a GHG Reduction Plan	Less than significant with mitigation
Cultural Resources (22)	All Alternatives – Impacts to historic/archaeological resources from construction and operation; disturbance of human remains	All Alternatives – Permanent loss of historic and archaeological resources and relocation of human remains due to construction and operation
Tribal Cultural Resources (23)	All Alternatives – Substantial adverse change in the significance of Tribal Cultural Resources	All Alternatives – Assumed presence of Tribal Cultural Resources in reservoir footprint area and permanent loss of those resources due to inundation
Visual Resources (24)	All Alternatives – Substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the inundation area; Alternative 2 – No feasible mitigation identified to address the visual character or quality of the Sacramento River discharge structure location	All Alternatives – Inundation substantially degrades the existing visual character; Alternative 2 – Sacramento River discharge structure substantially degrades the existing visual character
Indian Trust Assets (29)	All Alternatives – Operations potentially affecting current activities within an Indian Trust Asset	No effect/no adverse effect
Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics (30)	All Alternatives – Disproportionate and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations	All Alternatives – Construction and operation disproportionately and adversely affecting minority and low-income populations