



Meeting: **Joint Reservoir Committee & Authority Board**
Agenda Item 3.4

March 18, 2022

Subject: **Revised Message Platform**

Requested Action:

Receive an update of the Message Platform.

Detailed Description/Background:

The project's Communications Team has developed a revised Message Platform that includes our key communications/message points for the project. This revised Message Platform has been developed to provide high-level key message points regarding the project and is reflective of current and emerging issues regarding the project that has arisen over the past few months.

As part of this revision, the Communications Team categorized the Message Platform into 5 general topic areas (Water For Dry Years, Broad Statewide Participation, Environmental Benefits, Operations, and Key Advancements) and developed key themes and message points for each topic area. This format helps to keep the key message points focused on the project's primary topic areas and makes the Message Platform more concise and impactful. The format change also responds to the feedback we've received from Participants that felt topic area coverage could assist in communicating on specific aspects of the project, like environmental water.

The Message Platform will continue to be updated and refined regularly as the project continues to advance.

The Message Platform was reviewed and approved by the Ad Hoc Legislative & Outreach Committee at its February 17th meeting.

Prior Authority Board Action: None.

Fiscal Impact/Funding Source: None.

Staff Contact: Kevin Spesert

Primary Service Provider: Katz & Associates.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Updated Message Platform

SITES RESERVOIR MESSAGE PLATFORM

March 2022 Update

TOPIC: WATER FOR DRY YEARS

Sites Reservoir is a unique multi-benefit water storage project that provides a resilient and reliable supply of water for California’s environment, communities, and farms during dry periods.

- Sites Reservoir captures and stores water from the Sacramento River during **high flows**— after all other **water rights and regulatory requirements are met**— and is made available to California’s environment, communities, and farms when it’s most needed – especially during times of drought.
- If Sites Reservoir had been in place prior to 2021, **California would have had an additional 1 million acre-feet of water available** to the environment, communities, and farms during this drought.
- Sites Reservoir provides dedicated water specifically for the environment – creating a **flexible and reliable water supply**.

Sites Reservoir is just part of the solution – we can, are and must utilize all of the tools in our toolbox—water recycling, conservation, desalination, groundwater replenishment and more water storage.

- Water agencies, cities, counties and farmers throughout California are utilizing and exploring innovative ways to create a resilient water future.
- Our project participants are at the forefront of efforts such as water recycling and conservation—Sites Reservoir will augment these important programs.

Sites Reservoir is a 21st Century approach to water storage that prepares California for climate change, designed to work best under the most challenging climate change scenarios.

- California’s current water management system was simply not designed to accommodate our future climate realities– **but Sites Reservoir is**. Modeling shows that **Sites performs better under the most challenging climate change conditions**.

- Sites Reservoir functions as an **“insurance policy”** for future California droughts. Current climate projections indicate the majority of our future precipitation will come in the form of rain and not snow. **Sites Reservoir is specifically designed** to capture this rain and store it for use during dry periods.
- When constructed, Sites Reservoir will be **integrated** with the operations of both the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP), which will provide greater flexibility, reliability, and resiliency of our current statewide water management system.

TOPIC: BROAD STATEWIDE PARTICIPATION

Public water agencies, irrigation districts, the federal government, and the State of California have come together to advance Sites Reservoir.

- The Sites Project Authority – which is leading the planning, construction and future operations of Sites Reservoir—was **formed under California law as a Joint Powers Authority** in 2010, and functions as a **public agency** made up of several public water agencies, public irrigation districts, counties, and cities across the Sacramento Valley.
- Sites Reservoir is funded **100% by local, state, and federal public dollars**.
- Participation in Sites Reservoir is **broad and diverse**— including the Bureau of Reclamation, the State of California, public irrigation districts in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, as well as urban areas in Southern California and the Bay Area.
- These **participants represent millions of people, thousands of acres of food-producing farmland, and the environmental resource agencies** that have stewardship over rivers, fish, and habitat within the watershed.

The benefits Sites Reservoir delivers are as diverse as our participants.

- Sites Reservoir will provide significant **regional flood protection benefits** for the Sacramento Valley by storing flood flows that would normally impact the communities of Maxwell and Williams - protecting homes, businesses, and farms.
- Sites Reservoir will benefit the local and regional economy by **creating hundreds of construction-related jobs** during each year of the construction period, and long-term jobs related to operations and recreation.
- Sites Reservoir will provide additional recreational opportunities and contribute to the overall regional economy of the Sacramento Valley.

- Sites Reservoir is a **beneficiary pays** project, which means that the benefits of the project go to those paying. Each participant—including the State of California through its investment in Sites Reservoir under Proposition 1—has **full control over their portion of the storage space** and their proportionate share of the water diverted into Sites Reservoir.

TOPIC: ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Sites Reservoir is designed to be far more environmentally friendly than traditional dams.

- It is an off-stream facility that **does not dam a major river system** and would not block fish migration or spawning.
- 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.
- Sites Reservoir **does not threaten salmon** or other fish species in the Sacramento River. Sites Reservoir diversions would be **conducted under highly protective operating and permit conditions** that establish when water can be diverted.
- Numerous, substantial changes have been made to the Sites Reservoir proposal over the past several years to **ensure the project prioritizes environmental benefits and health including our State fisheries, while preserving river water supplies.**

Sites Reservoir offers many environmental benefits to support healthy fisheries and waterways.

- The State of California – through its investment in Sites Reservoir under Proposition 1 – is creating an **environmental water asset for California** that will provide water and dedicated storage for current and future environmental needs.
- Federal participation through the Bureau of Reclamation increases the environmental benefit with more water for salmon.
- The State’s **environmental water asset will be managed by state resources agency managers** who will decide how and when this water would be used—creating an **environmental water management tool for the state that does not currently exist.**
- A significant portion of Sites Reservoir’s annual water supplies will be **dedicated** to environmental uses to help improve conditions for **Delta smelt**; help preserve **cold-water pool** in Shasta Lake later into the summer months to support **salmon**

development, spawning, and rearing; and improve **Pacific Flyway habitat** for migratory birds and other native species.

- As currently proposed, Sites Reservoir includes **more cold water for salmon in the driest years** when it is needed most and provides an overall net benefit to Sacramento River salmon, Delta smelt, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta estuary.

TOPIC: OPERATIONS

Integrating Sites Reservoir into the state's existing water management system will help to restore flexibility, reliability, and resiliency to our statewide water supply

- 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.
- Sites Reservoir 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.
- **Participating agencies own their storage accounts in the Sites Reservoir.** This ownership includes storage space and a share of the project's diversions from the Sacramento River.
- Sites Reservoir could **contribute** to the increased fresh-water flow into the Delta during drier periods to assist with salinity management of this critical estuary.
- No other storage project currently under consideration in California can positively influence the **operational efficiencies of our existing statewide water system** like Sites Reservoir.

TOPIC: KEY ADVANCEMENTS

Sites Reservoir met several major milestones in 2021.

- Sites Reservoir met **several key milestones in 2021** that we are building on this year.
 - California Water Commission issued its feasibility determination, paving the way for continued State investment and project eligibility for additional funding under Proposition 1.

- Sites Reservoir received additional funding through Proposition 1 and federal investments.
- Sites Reservoir was invited to submit an application for up to 49% of the project cost (currently estimated to be \$2.2B) under the EPA WIFIA Program. The favorable financing and repayment terms in WIFIA will create cost savings for participants and add to the flexibility needed for affordability.
- Sites Project Authority and the Bureau of Reclamation released the draft Environmental Impact Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public comment.
- The achievements met in 2021 will take this project from the planning stage to final design and construction.

We are on track to deliver this vital project for California within this decade.

- Based on the substantial progress made to date, we are on track to begin construction in 2024.
- The milestones we are building towards in 2022 will bring us that much closer to the start of construction.
 - Sites Project Authority will be issuing the final Environmental Impact Report in the fall of 2022.
 - Key regulatory and permitting efforts are underway as we prepare to submit the Sites Reservoir water rights application and other key permits to the State of California.