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## To prepare for climate change, California is making a huge investment in water storage

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On Tuesday, the California Water Commission completed a groundbreaking process to make the state's largest investment in water storage in a generation.

With the commission's action, eight diverse projects around the state are in line to receive nearly \$2.7 billion from Proposition 1, approved by voters in 2014. These projects – including [\\$816 million for the Sites reservoir](#) north of Sacramento – could add 4.3 million acre-feet of new water storage both above and below ground, better preparing California for climate change and drought.



The proposed Sites Reservoir would flood this land west of Maxwell. The California Water Commission approved \$816 million for the project. Randy Pench Sacramento Bee file

This is good news for Californians because we desperately need more places to capture and store water during wet times to manage through inevitable droughts. Climate change, which already is reducing the Sierra snowpack and challenging our water delivery system, makes it even more critical to add storage in as many different forms as possible.

That's why the Brown administration's California Water Action Plan calls for investments in reservoirs and groundwater storage as part of an "all-of-the-above" strategy that also includes increased conservation, groundwater management, water recycling, desalination and more.

That approach was reflected in Proposition 1, which dedicated \$2.7 billion to award through a new competitive funding process that targets specific public benefits — ecosystem improvement, water quality, flood control, emergency response and recreation. To be eligible for funding, proponents were required to detail these public benefits from their projects. Their applications were subject to intensive evaluation and review over the past 11 months to identify and rank the projects with the strongest return on public investment.

This process has not been easy. The commission, project proponents, stakeholders and the public have broken new ground over the past four years to get to this milestone. Scientists with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board also contributed their expertise.

As a result, we are moving forward with diverse projects that include expanding existing reservoirs, boosting groundwater storage and building 21st century surface water storage facilities.

In approving Proposition 1, Californians entrusted the commission to invest in the public benefits of storage to achieve water reliability and resiliency. We are excited to see this vision being fulfilled. Now, more than half the funding provided by Proposition 1 is committed.

The proponents of the eight projects will continue their work to secure necessary permits, environmental documents, financial commitments and contracts before final funding can be awarded. Some projects may be online within two years, while others will take longer. The commission is confident that project applicants will use the momentum of recent months to get us to the next stage of building, expanding and strengthening California's water future for generations to come.

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