

For Immediate Release

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Coalition Urges the Newsom Administration to Reject the Sites Project Authority's Rushed Application for Regulatory Streamlining

SACRAMENTO – Today, Friends of the River, Defenders of Wildlife, and a coalition of conservation organizations submitted a [letter](#) to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) opposing the application for Sites Reservoir to be certified under the new Senate Bill (SB) 149 Infrastructure Streamlining Program. Acceptance into this program would mean that the Sites Project would receive a shortened judicial review period for litigation over their inadequate environmental documents.

This is a rushed application of this new program which itself came about through a rushed legislative process with little public input. **OPR has not even issued guidelines yet for which to determine project eligibility. Further, this is the first ever application of SB 149 and thus it is essential that the public be given ample time to review and participate in a meaningful way.**

Ultimately, this process undercuts due process by giving Governor Newsom sole authority to expedite harmful projects like Sites Reservoir, without having to answer to the public. **Newsom's decisions on SB 149 projects are not subject to judicial review**, essentially consolidating the Governor's authority.

Adding insult to injury, the public was not provided official notice of this application until October 10, leaving only 13 days of an already short 15-day review period to provide feedback. Instead, OPR buried the application four clicks onto its website with an illogical and disorganized process to find it. OPR later claimed in an email that the review period starts when the application is posted to the website and any email notification is a "courtesy."

This application is yet another example of the Sites Project Authority cutting corners to charge ahead with this project. The Sites project does not meet the criteria under SB 149 to be included in the streamlining program. Rather, Sites will have significant impacts to disadvantaged communities, would harm the environment and further exacerbate the crisis in the San Francisco Bay-Delta, and has not shown that it will prioritize water for ecosystems. Further, estimates show that Sites Reservoir will be a major greenhouse gas emitter, mostly in the form of methane. Sites Reservoir is the continuation of status quo water management in the state, the foundation of which is serial overallocation of the state's water resources.

The Sites project also undermines the fundamental legislative intent of SB 149 – to streamline investments in climate resiliency, safety, and infrastructure while maintaining environmental values. SB 149 was not intended for controversial and environmentally destructive projects.

“The Sites Project Authority is jumping the gun and attempting to take advantage of a messy regulatory process that hasn’t been fully developed,” said Keiko Mertz, Policy Director of Friends of the River. “The Sites project is not a 21st century water solution. It is expensive, harmful to people and the environment, and will add less than 1% to California’s water supply. The Sites project fails on its merits and should not be considered for judicial streamlining.”

“It is inappropriate for the Governor to prematurely certify a controversial and environmentally harmful project like Sites under the SB 149 program,” said Ashley Overhouse, Water Policy Advisor for Defenders of Wildlife. “Streamlining climate infrastructure is critical for our state’s future, this project distracts from and undermines that goal.”

This coalition calls on OPR/the Newsom Administration to not consider, or certify, Sites Project Authority’s rushed application for certification under the SB 149 program.

Read the letter [HERE](#).

For more information on the Sites Reservoir boondoggle, visit:

<https://www.friendsoftheriver.org/our-work/rivers-under-threat/sacramento-threat-sites/>

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