



AGRI-BUSINESS, WATER

Sites Reservoir Project Moving Forward After Environmental Review

Brian German, The Sun
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In a noteworthy development for California's water management, the Sites Project Authority, functioning as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act, has officially certified the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) and given the go-ahead to the Sites Reservoir Project. This approval represents a significant stride towards fortifying the reliability of statewide water supplies. The project is said to cater to the needs of diverse stakeholders including urban areas, farms, and the environment.

During the six-year-long environmental analysis, Fritz Durst, Chair of the Sites Project Authority Board of Directors, shared insights into the project's design philosophy. "Sites Reservoir is conceived as an innovative approach to water management, crafted to provide adaptability and dependability in response to our evolving climate," Durst explained.

The recently certified Final EIR, released jointly with the Bureau of Reclamation, evaluates the environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures linked to the project's construction and operation. Updates to the report reflect changes and address public comments, with revised modeling results ensuring no new or substantially greater impacts with the added refinements. This marks a significant step forward for the Sites Reservoir Project as it progresses through the final planning stages.

Jerry Brown, Executive Director of the Sites Project Authority, highlighted the collaborative nature of the project. "Sites Reservoir is an outcome of collective efforts, made feasible by the support of participants and government partners who acknowledge its distinctive advantages," Brown stated. The project's affordability, permissibility, and feasibility are attributed to feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders, ensuring a more inclusive venture.

The Sites Reservoir Project not only aims to augment water supplies but introduces a pioneering initiative to reserve water explicitly for environmental purposes. The approach seeks to provide support to native wildlife and their habitats during periods of drought. The off-stream water storage project, with a capacity of 1.5 million acre-feet,

seeks to bolster California's water and climate resilience while preserving and enriching the natural environment.



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