

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Friends of the River, Sierra Club, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance Condemn Today's Hastened Approval of Sites Reservoir's Environmental Impact Report**

**SACRAMENTO, CA** – On November 17, members of the Sites Project Authority Board, comprised of representatives from the agencies that will benefit from the project, voted unanimously to certify Sites' Environmental Impact Report just two weeks after giving the public access to the documents.

A coalition of environmental organizations, including Friends of the River (FOR), Sierra Club, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, strongly condemn this decision, as well as the decision by the Newsom administration to use Senate Bill (SB) 149 to fast-track Sites despite the [project's failure to meet statutory criteria](#) of the SB 149 Infrastructure Streamlining Program.

Unfortunately, this certification was a foregone conclusion. It comes as no surprise that the very beneficiaries of this environmental boondoggle would vote to certify the environmental documents and thus move one step closer to construction. However, it is a dangerous precedent set by the Newsom administration and these public agencies that a project like Sites, which has been shown numerous times to be harmful for the Delta, the climate crisis, and our water future, would be approved so hastily and without adequate time for public review.

As a coalition, FOR and its allies argue that Sites is not a 21st-century solution for the following reasons:

1. Sites Reservoir will add less than 1% to the state's water supply on average, but will allow project proponents to scalp water for profit during drought.
2. Sites Reservoir will damage the Sacramento River and Bay-Delta ecosystems by taking water even during the driest years.
3. [Sites Reservoir will emit approximately 362 million metric tons of CO2e or 362,000 metric tons of CO2e/year](#). That is the equivalent of 80,000 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles per year ([LA Times](#)).
4. Sites Reservoir is a continuation of the same poor water management strategies that have caused the water crisis, and harmed Californians and disadvantaged communities. We have [better alternatives](#).
5. Sites will not prioritize water for ecological benefits. Instead, each investor is allowed to manage their own storage space independently, with the State of California's block of environmental water given uniform treatment.

**Keiko Mertz, Policy Director for Friends of the River, said in response to today's approval:**  
"Despite the appearance of unanimity and kind words about teamwork and environmental

benefits in today's meeting, the environmental community continues to oppose the Sites Reservoir project due to countless harms. The project is an expensive boondoggle that won't provide net environmental benefits or meaningful increases in water supply. While today's vote was never in question, it is still disappointing to see this project escape public scrutiny at every turn."

**Chris Shutes, Executive Director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance said in response:** "The Sites Project will kill more fish faster. It's a water supply slush fund to sustain over-diversion of water. The only modern element is the deceptive environmental branding."

**In reaction to the unanimous EIR approval, Sierra Club Senior Policy Strategist Erin Wooley said:** "Building new dams and reservoirs at the expense of healthy watersheds is not a modern solution to California's water resilience challenges. Restoring the San Francisco Bay-Delta must include restoration of in-stream flows to support recovery of native fish and wildlife, and protect water quality for local communities. Sites Reservoir is an expensive and environmentally destructive proposal whose cost will be paid by taxpayers, water users in Southern California and the species the project claims to benefit."

Our coalition will continue to work together to stop the environmentally destructive Sites Reservoir Project and offer sustainable solutions for California's water future.

For more information on the Sites Reservoir boondoggle, visit:

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