U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
California-Great Basin Region

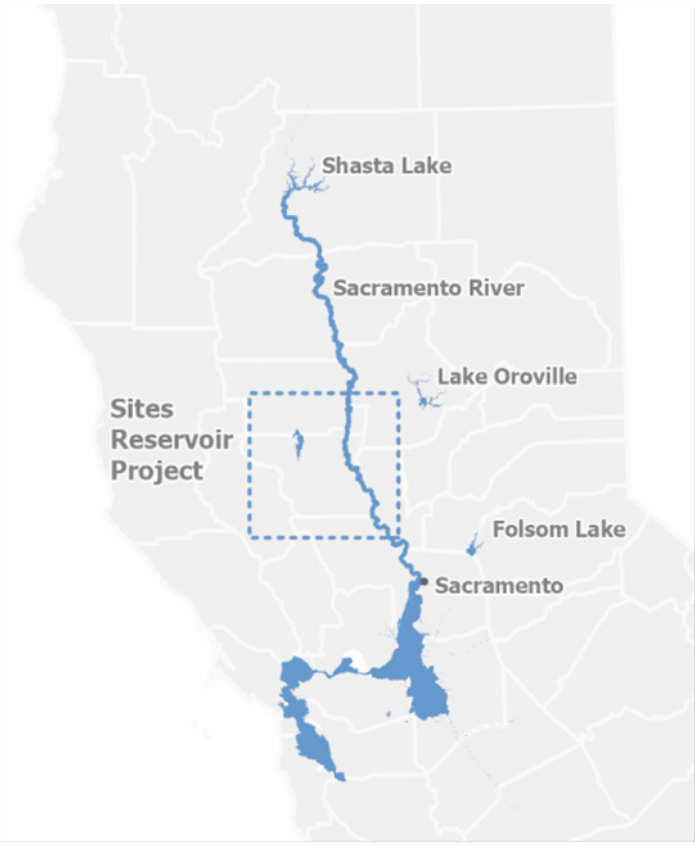
Sites Reservoir

Overview

Sites Reservoir is a proposed offstream reservoir in Northern California that will increase the state's water storage capacity, improve water supply reliability, and enhance ecosystem benefits. Located in the Sacramento Valley west of the town of Maxwell, the reservoir is designed to store water diverted from the Sacramento River during high-flow periods for use in dry years. Led by the Sites Project Authority, Reclamation is a federal partner working with the Authority and other local and state stakeholders to advance the project.

Project Description

Sites Reservoir is planned as an offstream surface water storage facility with a capacity of up to 1.5 million acre-feet. The project includes the construction of Golden Gate Dam, which will be approximately 310 feet tall, and other associated infrastructure to support water conveyance and storage. At full capacity, the reservoir would cover approximately 14,000 acres. Water will be diverted from the Sacramento River using existing canals and new conveyance systems and then stored in the reservoir for later use during dry periods.



Sites Reservoir would increase Northern California's water storage capacity by up to 15 percent.

Benefits

The Sites Reservoir Project offers multiple benefits. It will greatly improve water supply reliability by capturing water during wet years for use in times of drought, helping to stabilize water deliveries for agriculture, cities, and environmental purposes. The reservoir also enhances climate resilience by increasing California's ability to manage variable hydrologic conditions brought on by climate change. In addition, it will provide flexible water management tools to support fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. The project is

Photo showing an aerial view of the proposed Sites Reservoir location in Glenn and Colusa counties.

expected to support economic vitality in the region through more reliable water access and job creation associated with construction and long-term operations.

Sites Reservoir would allow Reclamation to preserve more cold water in Shasta to help critically endangered salmon and improve water quality conditions, especially in dry and critical years.

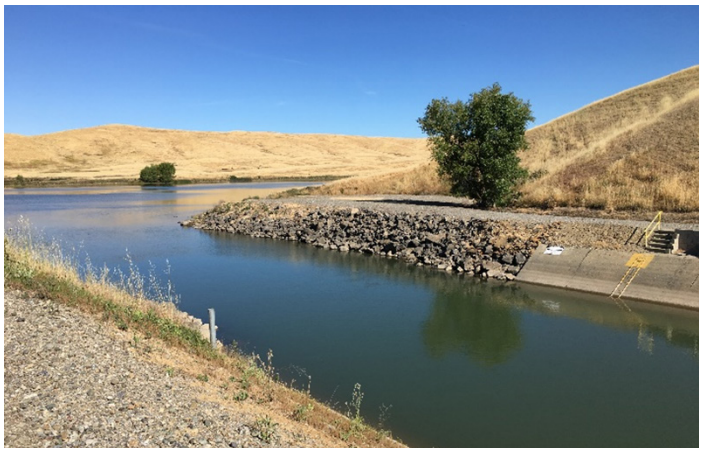
Environmental Commitments

Environmental stewardship is central to the planning and implementation of the Sites Reservoir Project. A portion of the stored water will be specifically allocated to support environmental needs, such as improving flows for salmon, Delta smelt, and other native fish species. The reservoir's flexible operations will allow for better timing and delivery of water to enhance habitat conditions, particularly during critical dry periods. The project also includes habitat restoration, conservation, and mitigation efforts to minimize environmental impacts and improve overall ecosystem health.

Sites Reservoir would provide water supply to Central Valley wildlife refuges.

Project Status

A Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) was completed in 2023. In October 2024, California Department of Fish and Wildlife issued Incidental Take Permits for the construction and operation of the project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion for construction in July 2025. The Sites Project Authority applied for a new water right in 2022, and scheduled hearing dates concluded in April 2025. A decision from the California State Water Resources Control Board is pending. Environmental compliance and water right processes are expected to continue through 2026.



The existing Tehama-Colusa Canal would be used to help convey Sacramento River water to Sites Reservoir.

Negotiations for a Partnership Agreement between Reclamation and the SIte Project Authority began in August 2025 and are ongoing. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027.

Visit https://www.usbr.gov/mp/nodos/ or https://sitesproject.org for more information.

Photo showing an artist's rendition of the proposed reservoir.