



# Sisk Dam/San Luis Reservoir

## Overview

B.F. Sisk Dam and San Luis Reservoir, located on the west side of California's Central Valley about 12 miles west of Los Banos, are an integral part of the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) and California State Water Project (SWP). The dam, built between 1963 and 1967, is a 382-foot-high earthfill embankment over 3.5-miles long that impounds San Luis Reservoir, the largest offstream reservoir in the United States. The reservoir has a total capacity of more than two million acre-feet, which provides supplemental irrigation water and municipal and industrial water for the federal CVP and SWP. B.F. Sisk Dam, also known as San Luis Dam, is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation and operated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Reservoir storage space is allotted 55% state and 45% federal.



*"What this project also symbolizes is the state working with the federal government; the local community working with the state, this program is unique," stated President Kennedy while keynoting the San Luis Reservoir dedication on August 18, 1962.*

## Safety of Dams Upgrade Project

Reclamation started the Safety of Dams Program in 1978 to ensure Reclamation dams do not present unreasonable risk to people, property, and the environment. The program focuses on evaluating and implementing actions to resolve safety concerns at Reclamation dams.

As part of the Safety of Dams Program, Reclamation delivered a B. F. Sisk Dam Safety of Dams Modification

Report to Congress in August 2020. The billion-dollar effort is Reclamation's largest project under the 1978 Safety of Dams Act, and when complete, will modernize the structure to reduce risks due to seismic events.

The dam safety project will add stability berms and other dam safety features to the existing 3.5-mile-long earthen dam. Increasing the dam crest by 12 feet will reduce downstream public safety concerns by reducing the likelihood of overtopping if slumping were to occur during a large earthquake.

Exploratory blasting at the facility occurred during 2020 in preparation for construction on the multi-year project to begin summer 2021. DWR is a cost-share partner in the project.



*B.F. Sisk Dam is 3.5-miles long; it impounds San Luis Reservoir that provides water to communities, farmland, and Pacific Flyway wetlands south-of-the-Delta.*

## Dam Raise and Reservoir Expansion Project for Water Storage

While implementing safety of dam modifications at B.F. Sisk Dam, Reclamation is partnering with San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority to investigate raising the dam an additional 10 feet to create an extra 130,000 acre-feet of storage in San Luis Reservoir. The additional space would be used to store water that could be delivered to south-of-Delta water contractors and wildlife refuges. This water would meet existing contractual obligations and not serve any new demands.



*Raising B.F. Sisk Dam and expanding San Luis Reservoir would create an additional 130,000 acre-feet of needed water storage south-of-the-Delta—enough water supply for two million people, over one million acres of farmland, and 200,000 acres of Pacific Flyway wetlands.*

A Final Feasibility Report for the project was transmitted to Congress in December 2020. Reclamation anticipates signing a Record of Decision for the project in 2021 after completing other environmental compliance requirements.



*Additional water storage in San Luis Reservoir would benefit wetlands such as Grasslands Wildlife Management Area.*



## Moving Water In and Out of San Luis Reservoir

San Luis Reservoir provides additional flexibility to the federal and state water delivery systems; it allows for storage of excess winter and spring flows diverted from the Delta until the water is needed later in the year by CVP and SWP south-of-Delta contractors.



*Aerial view displays San Luis Reservoir's O'Neill Forebay.*

San Luis Reservoir stores water that has traveled south from the Delta to the reservoir's forebay — the O'Neill Forebay. The water is then pumped uphill into San Luis Reservoir from the forebay, which is fed by CVP's Delta-Mendota Canal and the California Aqueduct. Water is released back into the forebay to continue downstream as needed for CVP and SWP water users.