

SWRCB Prioritizes Politics Over the Public Interest in Sites Decision **Board's Draft Decision Shows Deference to Moneyed Water Interests**

Press release from the California Water Impact Network

The Board's draft decision allows the Newsom administration to formalize strategies for diverting water from the Sacramento River for the project, which would include a 1.5 million acre-foot



"offsite" reservoir in Colusa and Glenn counties. The reservoir's current construction cost estimate is between \$6.2 and \$6.8 billion.^[1]

Promoted by the administration as a needed response to climate change, the reservoir's operation would be based on flow rules for the Sacramento River. The Board's draft decision would impose operating conditions designed to maintain water quality, which would drive up the cost of any water delivered to downstream customers.

"While the Board should have rejected the permit, the proposed operating conditions demonstrate why building another surface water reservoir is a foolish pursuit," said Max Gomberg, Senior Policy Analyst for the California Water Impact Network. "There is no business case for storing water for delivery to big water contractors on a river system that is already oversubscribed and needs more flow to sustain fish populations."

Several tribes have opposed the Sites project, and the draft decision does little to address their objections.

"The Board should be prioritizing tribal water rights, consistent with its racial equity commitments," said Gomberg."

A sixty-day public comment period is now in effect, with comments accepted until May 22. Following consideration of the comments, the draft will be reviewed by the Board's Administrative Hearings Office for possible revision and submission to the Board. A second comment period will follow prior to a final decision.

[1] <https://sitesproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/03-01-Updated-Cost-Estimate.pdf>