

The Public Benefits of Sites Reservoir

The fourth year of a drought has led to creative water management to provide water for multiple beneficial purposes throughout the Sacramento Valley, including the mosaic of cities and rural communities, farms, fish, birds and recreation.

Unfortunately, all these beneficial uses of water suffer during these dry years, with reduced water supplies for farmers and their crops and less than optimal habitat for fish and birds.

To reduce and potentially avoid these economic and environmental impacts in the future, the leaders in the Sacramento Valley are exploring long-term solutions that would provide an environmental block of water to provide public benefits for California in future dry years. In the Sacramento Valley, the discussion of long-term solutions inevitably leads to the value of Sites reservoir, a large off-stream regulating reservoir in the hills on the west-side of the Sacramento Valley.



The Department of Water Resources has analyzed that if Sites reservoir was in place in 2015, it would have stored an additional 410,000 acre-feet of water during this water year, even during a very dry year. The water that would have filled Sites reservoir is largely from the atmospheric river in December 2014 and the February 2015 storm. In wet years, the amount of water stored in Sites would be even larger. See: <http://www.water.ca.gov/storage/northdelta/sitesdiversionfaq.cfm>.

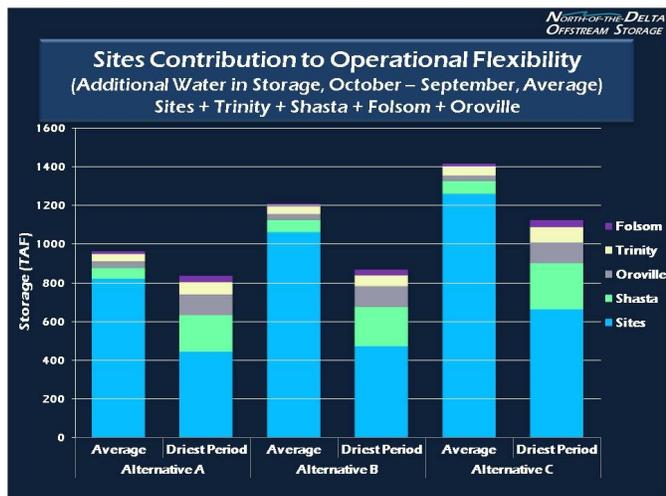
For context, the water in Sites reservoir (400,000 acre-feet plus) would be very valuable and would improve statewide water system operations and drought preparedness. The water available in the Sites regulating reservoir could be released or exchanged with water in other Northern California reservoirs to provide measurable improvements to both the Delta ecosystem and its tributaries in the Sacramento Valley. Additionally, the reservoir would provide significant public benefits that

improve the operation of the state water system, are cost effective and provide a net improvement in ecosystem and water quality conditions. This includes:

- Water quality and ecosystem improvements in the Delta that would help avoid much of the current conflict in the Delta over various beneficial purposes. It would also advance the long-term objectives of restoring ecological health and improving water management for beneficial uses of the Delta.



- Allow an additional 1.12 million acre-feet of water to be stored in other Sacramento Valley reservoirs (i.e., Shasta, Trinity, Folsom, Oroville) during a drought year, allowing exchanges that could provide more reliable cold water for the benefit of salmon in Sacramento Valley river systems. In 2015, DWR have been an additional 240,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Shasta for cold water management.



- Emergency response by providing flows for dilution and salinity repulsion in the event of a natural disaster or act of terrorism.

The four year drought has revealed the need for the public benefits associated with Sites Reservoir. See the FAQ on the Drought and Sites Reservoir at: <http://www.water.ca.gov/storage/northdelta/droughtandsites.cfm>

For additional information on Sites Reservoir, please visit <http://www.sitesjpa.net/index.php> or <http://www.water.ca.gov/storage/northdelta/>.

A video flyover of Sites Reservoir is available at: <https://youtu.be/zZ4vxhOMKx0>