

May 22, 2026

State Water Resources Control Board and  
Administrative Hearings Office  
[sites-wr-application@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:sites-wr-application@waterboards.ca.gov)

**Re: Letter in Support of Sites Reservoir Project**

Dear Chair Esquivel, Vice-Chair D'Adamo, Board members Firestone, Maguire, Morgan, and Administrative Hearing Officer Kuenzi:

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) appreciates this opportunity to submit comments in support of the Sites Reservoir Project (Project) and recognizes the State Water Resources Control Board (Board) and the Administrative Hearings Office for your careful consideration of the Project throughout the hearing process. The Project will realize a longstanding vision to secure water supplies by diverting excess flows from the Sacramento River during wet seasons and storing it for multiple purposes during drier seasons, limiting impacts to instream beneficial uses and public trust resources. The Board's issuance of a draft water right Permit and draft Decision for the Project represents a momentous step toward much-needed water infrastructure, consistent with the State's Water Supply Strategy goal to add four million acre-feet of above-and below-ground storage capacity.

The Board has long been a leader in advancing climate resilient strategies to expand and diversify our water supplies—ensuring long-term water reliability for communities, while preserving critical environmental protections. As our state continues to experience significant growth and intensified climate impacts, the Board's acceleration of the state's recharge, capture, and storage capacity is even more critical.

Intensifying swings between drought and flood cycles characterize our present and future hydrology, statewide. Extreme wet weather events are followed by increasingly hotter and drier weather patterns that include a projected ten percent loss in total water supply by 2040. It is against this backdrop that the Project provides an enhanced mechanism to increase the state's water supply resilience while ensuring durable protections for senior water rights holders, California's fisheries, critical habitat, and water quality, and meeting tribal obligations.

As part of its work to improve system wide management in the face of climate impacts, the Board is also making great strides to integrate more nimble approaches into its decision-making processes. These approaches enable legal users of water to optimize the benefits associated with aquatic habitat restoration, in addition to restoring flows. They include the

implementation of the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program—a program supported by several state agency partners.

CalEPA appreciates the draft Permit and Decision's suggestion that the Project could avail itself of this implementation pathway and requests that the Board consider explicit language in the Permit that recognizes this as a viable pathway for the Project, consistent with the Board's balancing of water supply needs with the protection of public trust resources. Based on the Project's notable capacity to secure water supplies for current and future legal users of water, CalEPA also requests that the Board consider aligning the Project's Sacramento River-based Delta outflow requirement with the HRL program and removing the presence of HRL program flows as a condition to legal diversions of water for the Project.

CalEPA again appreciates the Board's consideration of the Project and urges the issuance of a final Permit and Decision that reflects the weight of California's water supply needs in balance with protecting our public trust resources.

Thank you for your continued dedication as stewards of our water future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yana Garcia', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Secretary Yana Garcia  
California Environmental Protection Agency