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Sites Reservoir is a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

The controversial project diverts water and funding away from real solutions.

Sacramento, CA – Today's [announcement](#) that Governor Newsom's California Water Commission allocated another \$219 million for the proposed Sites Reservoir is a harmful regression for California's rivers, their salmon, and for Tribal and rural communities.

The Governor claims Sites will prepare California for a "hotter, drier future." In reality this massive, \$6.8 billion boondoggle will siphon water from the already overallocated Sacramento River, threatening endangered salmon runs, Tribal cultural sites, and the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. By diverting the river's cold, clean flows into a reservoir without natural flushing, Sites would create stagnant waters that would produce toxic algal blooms, [release methane gas](#), and concentrate mercury. Rather than providing safe drinking water, it would contaminate the supply for roughly 27 million Californians who depend on the Bay-Delta.

Sites Reservoir would not create new water; it would store water taken away from the environment and communities that depend on healthy rivers and then allow even more water to be moved from the North State to big ag through the Delta Tunnel. The Governor is correct that water is "a basic human right." However, instead of investing money in securing clean drinking water and restoring rivers for millions of Californians, the Governor is prioritizing water exports for crops grown in arid regions.

"California is at a crossroads," said Josa Talley, Communications and Outreach Coordinator with Save California Salmon. "We can spend billions on destructive projects like Sites and the Delta Tunnel that privatize and divert water to big agribusiness, or we can invest in real climate solutions like restoring rivers, removing barriers to salmon migration, repairing aging infrastructure, supporting Tribal stewardship, and prioritizing water conservation. Enough broken promises."

Sites Reservoir also violates California's obligation to consult and protect Tribal Nations and sacred sites. The project threatens to inundate burial grounds and destroy cultural resources which is a continuation of California's long history of ignoring Indigenous rights in the name of "progress."

"This project is a wolf in sheep's clothing," said Regina Chichizola, Save California Salmon's Executive Director. "Governor Newsom touts Sites as a path to protecting Californian's right to clean water, but in reality it comes at a severe cost; to taxpayers, to our environmental protections, to Tribal cultural resources, and to what remains of wild California Spring Chinook Salmon Runs. Instead of pouring billions into an expensive private reservoir that would further privatize California's limited water resources, increase water bills and create significant water quality impairments downstream, the state should use this money to go towards actions like replenishing critical ground water supplies and replacing contaminated drinking water systems"

As salmon runs collapse, drinking water contamination worsens, and climate extremes intensify, California cannot afford more false solutions. We call on Governor Newsom and the Legislature to reject Sites Reservoir and the Delta Conveyance Project and instead prioritize science-based, community-driven approaches that truly protect water, salmon, and people.

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