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## Environmental and Tribal Groups Respond to Governor's Press Conference Highlighting Sites Reservoir

*Colusa, California* - Today Governor Newsom held a press conference in Colusa, California praising environment exceptions and Tribal consultation related Sites Reservoir off of the Sacramento River as part of his 'California Jobs First' tour. Newsom used the conference to describe the regional 8-county economic plan today and highlight a few special water projects, including the proposed Sites Reservoir and the Delta Conveyance Project, touting their economic and supposed climate benefits.

Sites Reservoir is a proposed 14,000 acre private reservoir in the lower Sacramento River/Upper Bay Delta near Maxwell, California that depends on large scale diversion from the ailing Sacramento River. It would become one of the largest reservoirs in the state and like the Delta Tunnel, it would be designed to mainly deliver costly water to Southern California and South of the Delta agricultural interests. California has promised over \$816 million in taxpayer money to the project and has streamlined public process laws to allow quick approval of the proposed reservoir.

Opponents of the reservoir advise that Sacramento River water is already over-allocated by five times its available and that the reservoir will add to climate change emissions. They say the Tribal, water supply quality, and environmental impacts would be devastating.

"Our governor has decided to sideline our most important public processes in order to build a 1.5 million acre-foot reservoir on lands that are sacred to California Native American Tribes," said Regina Chichizola of Save California Salmon. "All Californians should be concerned about privatization of our public water resources. It is obvious the interests of water brokers, big ag, and Southern California water districts mean more to the governor than justice for Native American Tribes and California's most important public resource, clean water."

Recently Tribes testified to address significant concerns regarding the proposed reservoir's impacts. They highlighted the lack of meaningful Tribal consultation on the project and advised that the reservoir would flood Tribal cultural resources, Native American graves and sacred sites, and further degrade water quality and salmon runs, harming an important Indigenous food source and traditional lifeway systems. They testified the reservoir threatens Tribal water and fishing rights and would build new diversion pumps to take fresh water from the Sacramento River and release warm, polluted water into the Bay Delta.

"It is offensive that the state so poorly consulted with Tribes and then congratulated Tribes for stomaching the state's neglect and continued abuse of their requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Tribes are still in need of Consultation and this project remains in violation of CEQA regardless of how the agencies want to spin it." Sherri Norris from California Indian Environmental Alliance pointed out.

In addition to the testimony, scientists testified that Sites Reservoir threatened to release toxic algae, warm water and mercury into the state's water supply. They said discharges of polluted water have the potential to adversely impact downstream Tribal lands and water quality, along with the drinking water for over 25 million Californians and the health of local ecosystems.

"Tribes and other project opponents have valid concerns including contamination of drinking water supplies, salmon extinction, and inundation of lands that hold irreplaceable Native American sacred sites and cultural resources. The Project as proposed will cause irreparable harm to Tribal Cultural Resources, including ancestral village sites and burial sites. Governor Newsom should apologize to Tribes for his statement," added Kasil Willie, Staff Attorney for Save California Salmon.

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Editor's note: More information and links to Tribal testimony on Sites is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUMRmpvfi5w&list=PLdH1M5zlp0VU7p32yOzAt6uwrIq>

[x8LN4z&index=27](#) . More information and previous press releases are available by contacting Regina Chichizola at [Regina@californiasalmon.org](mailto:Regina@californiasalmon.org)