



SAN GORGONIO PASS
WATER AGENCY
A California State Water Project Contractor

August 18, 2025

SENT VIA EMAIL: cwc@water.ca.gov

California Water Commission
P.O. Box 924836
Sacramento, CA 94236

RE: Support for WSIP Early Funding Amendments and Sites Reservoir Project

Dear California Water Commission,

My name is Lance Eckhart, and I serve as the General Manager and Chief Hydrogeologist of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency ("SGPWA"). I am writing in strong support of the proposed WSIP early funding amendments and reallocation of Water Storage Investment Program ("WSIP") funding to the Sites Reservoir Project, a vital and timely investment in California's water future. As a long-standing participant in the State Water Project ("SWP") and a committed partner in the Sites Project, SGPWA views this initiative as essential to improving statewide water resilience, enhancing environmental benefits, and delivering lasting economic value.

SGPWA serves a rapidly growing and economically disadvantaged region in Riverside County at the terminus of the SWP system. Our service area includes Beaumont, Banning, and Calimesa, three of the fastest-growing cities in California, as well as historically underserved areas such as Cabazon. These communities depend heavily on imported water to balance groundwater overdraft, manage adjudicated basins, and support sustainable growth. Due to regulatory constraints and climate change, our SWP supplies are becoming increasingly volatile. Through strategic planning, strong partnerships, and investments in infrastructure, SGPWA utilizes conjunctive use, coordinating surface water and groundwater resources, to adapt to these challenges and provide long-term water reliability for the region.

Sites Reservoir is a 21st-century, multi-benefit water storage project that will provide a robust dry-year water supply and bolster drought resiliency statewide. By capturing and storing up to 1.5 million acre-feet of water during wet periods, it will allow California to maximize stormwater harvest, improve environmental water availability, and diversify water supply portfolios. This approach directly supports SGPWA's strategy of capturing surplus water in wet years and storing it for use during dry years.

A particularly important benefit is its novel approach to ecosystem public benefits under Prop 1, dedicating a portion of storage specifically to support fish and their habitat. Sites will be the first reservoir in California to reserve the largest share of

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PG, CHG

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its supply for environmental purposes, providing flexible management to adapt to changing ecological conditions.

For our region, Sites Reservoir represents:

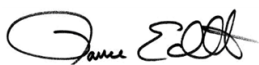
1. Collaboration for the Common Good: Partnering federal, state, environmental, agricultural, municipal, and industrial interests to ensure broad statewide benefits.
2. Dry-Year Reliability: A dependable supply when hydrologic conditions are poor, improving water security for disadvantaged and tribal communities.
3. Climate Change Response: Capturing excess flows in wet years and making them available in dry years, reducing the impact of extreme weather patterns.
4. Agricultural and Food Security: Supporting irrigation needs that underpin California's and the nation's food supply, with positive ripple effects on economically disadvantaged communities.
5. Economic and Local Benefits: Strengthening the local economy, supporting small businesses, creating jobs, and generating tax revenue.
6. Affordable Housing: Supporting state and local housing goals by ensuring reliable water supplies that keep development costs stable, enabling more affordable housing in disadvantaged San Geronio Pass communities.

We believe the proposed WSIP early funding amendments, removing the current dollar cap and allowing a second early funding opportunity, are critical to enabling Sites to maintain momentum and meet project milestones without unnecessary delay. Increased early funding flexibility will help large, complex, multi-benefit projects achieve construction readiness sooner, lock in favorable pricing before inflation and market volatility increase costs, and ultimately deliver long-term financial value to the State and the communities these projects serve.

By providing this flexibility, the Commission will directly support the advancement of the Sites Reservoir Project. Sites aligns with the State's Water Supply Strategy by improving water reliability, protecting ecosystems, and sustaining our economy.

Given these benefits, we ask the California Water Commission to act with urgency to adopt the proposed WSIP early funding amendments and reallocate funding so this vital project can move forward without delay. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a sustainable, resilient water future for California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance Eckhart", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lance Eckhart
General Manager