



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 12/10/2019

File #: 19-1728

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Public Works

Agenda Section: Time Certain Matter

SUBJECT:

9:15 a.m. - Letters to the Sites Project Authority and Bureau of Reclamation Regarding Sites Reservoir Project

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive public input on potential impacts from the Sites Reservoir Project on Humboldt County's Trinity River interests; and
2. Authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the two (2) attached letters to the Sites Project Authority and Bureau of Reclamation.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

N/A

DISCUSSION:

The Sites Reservoir Project is a proposed off-stream storage facility located in Glenn and Colusa counties, approximately ten (10) miles west of the town of Maxwell (Attachment 1). The facility would include an approximately one point eight (1.8) million acre-feet water storage reservoir with associated dams, diversion structures, pipelines, electrical generating facilities, overhead powerlines, roads and bridges. The reservoir would be filled through the diversion of winter flows from the Sacramento River at two (2) existing diversion sites with existing canals and a proposed new diversion structure and pipeline. The facility would be owned and operated by the Sites Project Authority, a joint powers authority formed by several irrigation districts. Funding for construction is proposed from the Water Supply Investment Program of Proposition 1, passed in 2014. The facility is intended to be integrated with the Federal Central Valley Project and State Water Project systems.

The Trinity River Division of the Central Valley Project diverts water stored in Trinity Lake into the Sacramento River through the Clear Creek tunnel and Whiskeytown Lake. Humboldt County has a vested interest in the Central Valley Project because the county holds a water contract with the Bureau of Reclamation for annual releases of not less than fifty thousand (50,000) acre-feet from Trinity Lake into the Trinity River. The Trinity River flows through Humboldt County for approximately thirty-one (31) river miles before discharging to the Klamath River at Weitchpec. The Trinity River is the largest

tributary to the Klamath River, which flows through Humboldt County for approximately sixty (60) river miles before discharging to the ocean in Del Norte County. The Trinity River Basin provides habitat for anadromous fish species and constitutes an important resource for commercial, recreational and tribal fisheries.

On January 9, 2018, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors approved a letter (Attachment 2) to the Sites Project Authority which commented on the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (“Draft EIR/EIS”) and requested assurance that construction and operation of the Sites Reservoir Project will result in no additional demands for diversions of Trinity River water to the Sacramento Basin. On January 15, 2018, the Chair of the Sites Project Authority issued a letter (Attachment 3) to the Chair of the Board of Supervisors stating that the Sites Project has never planned or proposed to divert water that was released by the Bureau of Reclamation and conveyed to the Sacramento River watershed. The letter stated that the Sites Project Authority commits to the construction and operations that will result in no additional demand for diversions from the Trinity River to the Sacramento River basin. However, a technical report (Attachment 4) prepared by Kamman Hydrology & Engineering (“Kamman”) on behalf of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Association and Save California Salmon identified potentially significant impacts to the Trinity River. In addition, the surface water modeling for the Draft EIR/EIS did not include an accounting of Humboldt County’s water contract with the Bureau of Reclamation, nor did it include the anticipated flow releases described in the Bureau of Reclamation’s Long-Term Plan to Protect Adult Salmon in the Lower Klamath River.

Proposed letter No. 1 (Attachment 5) requests that the Sites Project Authority commit to a term and condition in their water rights application or alternatively, a Memorandum of Understanding that would provide a binding commitment to avoid adverse impacts to the Trinity River. Proposed letter No. 2 (Attachment 6) requests that the Sites Project Authority and Bureau of Reclamation revise and recirculate the Draft EIR/EIS due to the new information presented in the January 2019 Kamman report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed action will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

The recommended actions support the Board of Supervisors’ Strategic Framework by advancing local interests in natural resource discussions.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Sites Project Authority, Bureau of Reclamation

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Maps

File #: 19-1728

2. January 9, 2018 letter from the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
3. January 15, 2018 letter from the Sites Project Authority
4. January 21, 2019 Kamman report
5. Proposed letter No. 1 to the Sites Project Authority
6. Proposed letter No. 2 to the Sites Project Authority and Bureau of Reclamation

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: C-6

Meeting of: January 9, 2018

File No.: N/A