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# California

## Flood control benefits from new storage projects debated

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

SHASTA LAKE, Calif. — If all of California's proposed water-storage projects were already built, would they have lessened the severity of flooding and other impacts from this winter's heavy storms?

Perhaps, say federal and state water officials.

For instance, Sites Reservoir, a planned 1.8 million acre-foot reservoir expected to vie for Proposition 1 bond funds, may have captured enough water to prevent at least some of the flooding in the Maxwell area on Feb. 18, said Ajay Goyal, chief of the statewide infrastructure investigations branch for the California Department of Water Resources.

The proposed \$3.6 billion reservoir would have held back some water from Stone Corral Creek and other creeks, which swelled and prompted the evacuation of Maxwell, he said.

"That creek will have less water coming down because it will be caught by a dam," Goyal said, adding that water in area creeks would be sent from the reservoir.

"You wouldn't have uncontrolled water coming in," he said.

But the degree to which flooding could have been averted would depend on timing, cautions Louis Moore, spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in Sacramento. Sites could have held back water, but some of the area's flooding was caused by torrential rainfall in low-lying areas, Moore said.

"Even though you might have the space (for water), it would still require getting that water there," Moore said, adding that "it's not really clear" how much of Maxwell's flood water could have been held by, or diverted to, Sites.

Goyal agreed, noting that Sites' biggest benefits for flood control would occur when the torrential rains fall upstream and can be captured.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Water is released from Shasta Dam in Northern California in late February. State and federal officials say proposed storage projects might have lessened flooding and other impacts from this winter's big storms.

Their comments come as U.S. Reps. John Garamendi, D-Calif., and Doug LaMalfa, R-Calif., have reintroduced legislation to speed up the federal review of Sites Reservoir and allow the federal government to be involved in construction. The two originally teamed on legislation in 2015 that would have set a deadline of late last year for the feasibility study, but the bill didn't make it out of the House Natural Resources Committee.

"The recent feast-or-famine water years should remind us all of the importance of building safe, environmentally friendly long-term storage that can take advantage of wet years and help provide for our water needs during drier periods," Garamendi said in a statement.

Farm groups have been quick this winter to use flooding and other impacts to call for more storage. For example, as the California Farm Bureau Federation was assessing damage to crops and fields during the Presidents' Day weekend storms, president Paul Wenger argued flood control releases show a need to enhance the state's storage capacity.

"Believe it or not, there are people who think we don't need more water storage, and that we should even tear down many of the facilities we now have," Wenger, a Modesto area

nut farmer, said in a statement. "These activists don't care how many people suffer from devastating floods in winters like this. They don't care how many people suffer from water shortages during drought."

Sites is one of several projects around the state that have been identified for potential

funding from Proposition 1, the \$7.5 billion water bond passed by voters in 2014. The California Water Commission will begin taking applications this year for \$2.7 billion set aside in the bond for large storage projects.

Other potential projects include the proposed \$2.5 billion Temperance Flat Reservoir near Fresno and a proposal to raise Shasta Dam by as much as 18 feet.

Sites would get about 500,000 acre-feet a year from high flows in the Sacramento River, Goyal noted. That opportunity would occur in most years, he said.

"It's not that you have to have flooding, but you have to have good flow and the (Sacramento-San Joaquin River) Delta conditions have to be met," he said.

Temperance Flat would create 1.26 million acre-feet of new storage above Miller-ton Lake, easing flood risks along the San Joaquin River, Goyal said.

## Scant demand for state's cap-and-trade pollution permits

By **JONATHAN J. COOPER**  
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO (AP) — California saw another three months of weak demand for pollution permits amid persistent uncertainty about the future of the state's cap on carbon emissions, according to state data released last week.

California will take in only about \$8 million from an auction that could have generated \$592 million or more if all permits were sold. The program is a prime funding source for projects including high-speed rail and transit construction.

For years, each quarterly auction consistently generated hundreds of millions of dollars.

Fewer than one in five permits were distributed at an auction last month, according to the data from the California Air Resources Board. The vast majority were sold by utilities, which get them for free from the state, while some were sold to polluters in Quebec, the Canadian province that sells permits at the same auction.

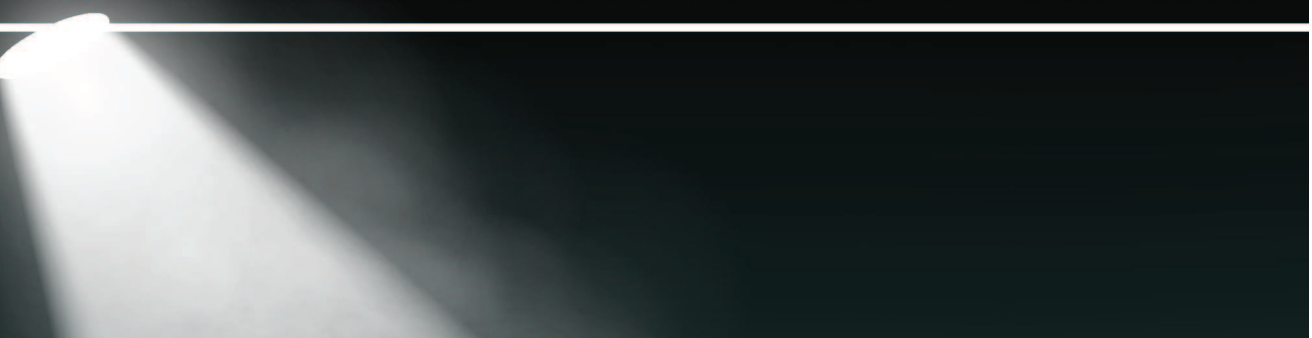
But revenue has plummeted in three of the last four auctions amid a series of pressures that

have depressed demand. A glut of permits on the market means companies don't need to buy them at auction to authorize their emissions in the near future. A state appeals court is considering a case that challenges the authority for the state to sell pollution permits. And the Legislature is considering whether to give the program clear authority to continue past 2020.

"The incentives aren't such to be aggressively purchasing allowances from the auctions that you aren't going to need in the near term," said Alex Jackson, a lawyer for the Natural Resources Defense Fund.

The program, known as "cap and trade," limits the amount of carbon that can be released each year and requires companies that pollute to buy permits for each ton of carbon they release. The scarce demand for permits means revenue will likely fall far short of the \$1 billion that Gov. Jerry Brown projected for the current fiscal year. Three-quarters into the budget year, the auctions have generated only about \$380 million, according to the nonpartisan legislative analyst.

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