December 1, 2014

FAQs: The Drought and Sites Reservoir

As the drought continues, DWR engineers are monitoring storage in Northern California reservoirs. On October 22, North Of Delta (NOD) Storage, or total storage in Trinity, Shasta, Oroville, and Folsom reservoirs, went below 3.0 Million Acre-Feet (MAF) for only the second time since the reservoirs were built. More recently, NOD Storage was at 2.80 MAF at the end of November, 2014. Only 1977 NOD Storage was lower, at 1.93 MAF. The Historical Total NOD Storage Figure shows storage in the four northern California reservoirs over time, with drought periods, including the current drought, highlighted in red. For perspective, average NOD Storage is 8.0 MAF.

How much water could Sites Reservoir add to NOD Storage in a drought like this?

With historic runoff, current operations, and assuming implementation of Sites Reservoir, NODOS Alternative C:

Drought[1] End-of-September NOD Storage Increase = 900 Thousand Acre Feet (TAF)

This would be a 27% improvement, reflecting additional water in storage in the four existing reservoirs and in Sites Reservoir.

What other benefits would Sites Reservoir provide during drought?

This improved NOD Storage would support a diverse set of water resources benefits. A direct result is improved coldwater pools in the reservoirs noted previously, which support anadromous fish populations downstream of their dams. For example, Shasta Lake's coldwater pool would be improved, resulting in improved temperatures for salmonids in the Upper Sacramento River, below Shasta Dam.

Drought[1] Cold Water Pool Improvement in Shasta Lake = 240 TAF

This would be a 12% improvement during these critical periods

In addition to the storage and habitat improvements upstream, Sites also provides drought water supply benefits downstream:

Drought[1] Delta Exports Water Supply Increase = 490 TAF/year

This would be an 11% improvement

Notes:

[1] Drought performance is determined by the average performance during historic drought periods, years 1929-34, 1976-77, and 1987-92