U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
California-Great Basin

B.F. Sisk Dam/San Luis Reservoir

Overview

B.F. Sisk Dam and San Luis Reservoir, located on the west side of California's Central Valley about 12 miles west of Los Banos, are an integral part of the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) and California State Water Project (SWP). The dam, built between 1963 and 1967, is a 382-foot-high earthfill embankment over 3.5-miles long that impounds San Luis Reservoir, the largest offstream reservoir in the United States. The reservoir has a total capacity of more than 2 million acre-feet, which provides irrigation water and municipal and industrial water for the CVP and SWP. B.F. Sisk Dam, previously known as San Luis Dam, is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation and operated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Reservoir storage space is allotted 55% state and 45% federal.

B.F. Sisk Dam impounds San Luis Reservoir, providing water for farmland, communities, and Pacific Flyway wetlands south-of-the-Delta.

Safety of Dams Upgrade Project

Reclamation started the Safety of Dams Program in 1978 to ensure Reclamation dams do not present unreasonable risk to people, property, and the environment. The program focuses on evaluating and implementing actions to resolve safety concerns at Reclamation dams.

As part of the Safety of Dams Program, Reclamation delivered a B. F. Sisk Dam Safety of Dams Modification Report to Congress in August 2020. The billion-dollar effort is Reclamation's largest project under the 1978 Safety of Dams Act, and when complete, will modernize the structure to reduce risks due to seismic events.

The dam safety project is adding stability berms and other dam safety features to the existing 3.5-mile-long earthen dam. Increasing the dam crest by 10 feet will reduce downstream public safety concerns by reducing the likelihood of overtopping if slumping were to occur during a large earthquake.

Construction is underway to improve the seismic reliability of B.F. Sisk Dam; it is Reclamation's largest project under the 1978 Dam Safety Act.

In March 2022, the Department of the Interior announced a $100 million investment in the B.F. Sisk Dam modification project as part of President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. DWR is a cost-share in the project. Construction activities began June 2022.

Dam Raise and Reservoir Expansion Project for Water Storage

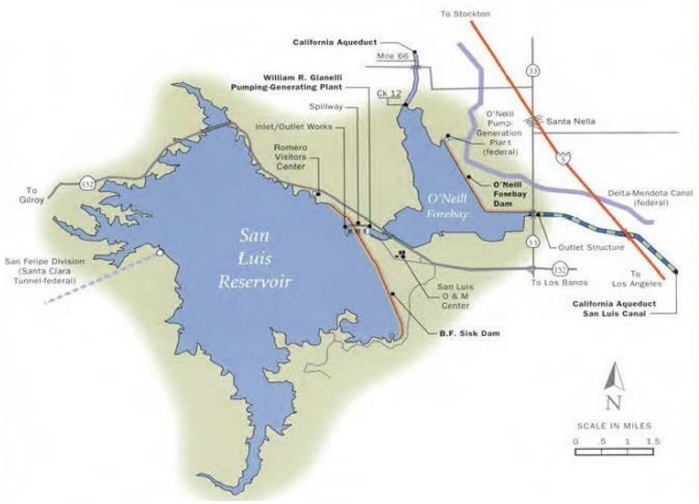
While implementing safety of dam modifications at B.F. Sisk Dam, Reclamation is partnering with San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority to raise the dam an additional 10 feet to create an extra 130,000 acre feet of

Raising B.F. Sisk Dam and expanding San Luis Reservoir will create an additional 130,000 acre-feet of needed water storage south-of-the-Delta—enough water supply for two million people, over one million acres of farmland, and 135,000 acres of Pacific Flyway wetlands.

storage in San Luis Reservoir. The additional space will be used to store water that can be delivered to south-of-Delta CVP water contractors and wildlife refuges. This water would meet existing contractual obligations and not serve any new demands.

A $25 million investment to the project under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was announced in October

Additional water storage in San Luis Reservoir would benefit wetlands such as Grasslands Wildlife Management Area.



2022. and an additional $10 million in July 2023. The project was also authorized $60 million for construction from the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, for a total of $95 million in federal contributions to date in construction costs..

Aerial view displays San Luis Reservoir's O'Neill Forebay.

Moving Water In and Out of San Luis Reservoir

San Luis Reservoir provides additional flexibility to the federal and state water delivery systems by allowing for storage of excess winter and spring flows diverted from the Delta until the water is needed later in the year by CVP and SWP south-of-Delta contractors.

San Luis Reservoir stores water that has traveled south from the Delta to the reservoir's forebay — the O'Neill Forebay. The water is then pumped uphill into San Luis Reservoir from the forebay, which is fed by CVP's Delta-Mendota Canal and the California Aqueduct. Water is released back into the forebay to continue downstream as needed for CVP and SWP water users.