

Era of dam building may not be over in Calif.

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

This tranquil ranching valley lies 15 miles west of the Sacramento River. A one-lane bridge spans a dried-up creek at the valley entrance. But when Jeff Sutton stands there, he imagines water, lots of it.

Never mind that talk of flooding the Antelope Valley north of Sacramento and turning it into a reservoir is older than Sutton. The time has finally come, he says. "It's the right project at the right place."

Drought, climate change and environmental curbs on water deliveries are fueling campaigns for more water storage in California. Sites Reservoir – as it would be called after the tiny settlement it would wipe off the map – is one of a handful of resurgent proposals challenging the notion that the era of big dam building is over.

Central Valley growers especially are pushing dam projects as their salvation, despite multibillion dollar price tags and studies that show the new reservoirs would do little to boost the state's overall water supplies.

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