

DAC Engagement and Outreach Recommendations Kaweah River Basin IRWM Group

Prepared by Community Engagement and Planning Team, Self-Help Enterprises

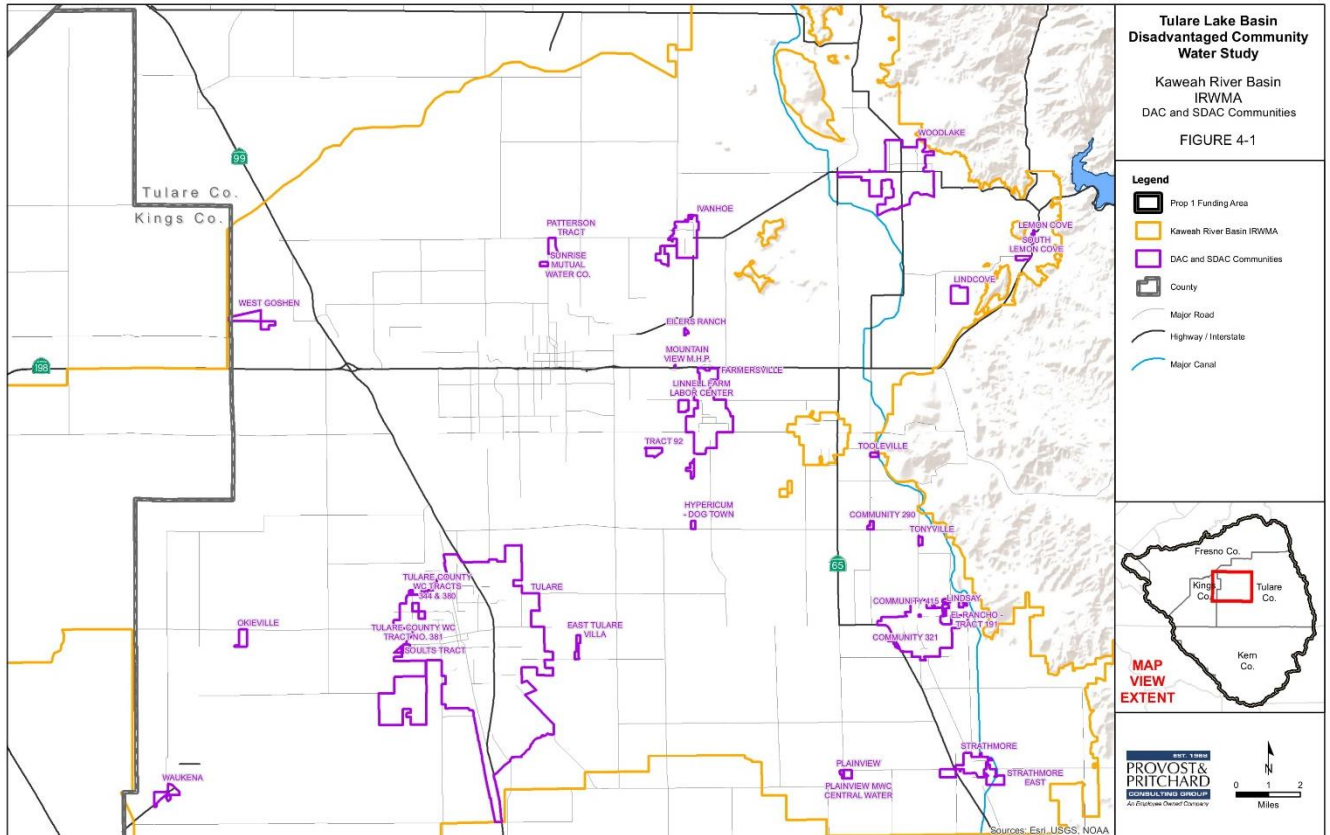
Objective

The Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program is a statewide voluntary water planning and implementation program established in 2002 to incentivize regional collaboration among multiple local water agencies towards the implementation of multi-benefit projects.

The Tulare-Kern Funding Area (TKFA) Disadvantaged Community Involvement Program (DACIP) is a grant-funded effort aimed at improving the involvement of Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning. The Disadvantaged Community Education and Engagement Program (DACEEP) was implemented within the Tulare-Kern Funding Area, which encompasses most of Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare Counties. The DACEEP is focused on improving understanding of community water needs and the IRWM process as well as encouraging DAC participation and engagement in IRWM activities. As part of the DACEEP, DAC participation and understanding of IRWM were evaluated to develop individual DAC engagement and outreach recommendations for the Kaweah River Basin IRWM Group.

DACs Landscape

A Disadvantaged Community (DAC) is defined as a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80 percent of the Statewide annual median household income (Water Code §79505.5). The figure below identifies the disadvantaged communities within the Kaweah River Basin IRWM region boundary:



Opportunities for DAC Participation

The Kaweah River Basin IRWM region has the following opportunities available for IRWM groups:

Governing Board: While there are no specific opportunities for DACs to have a seat on the Governing Board, a DAC could secure a seat on the Governing Board if the DAC is a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Per the IRWM plan, “Only entities which are signatory to the restated MOU, dated November 30, 2019, with KDWCD, specific to IRWM matters, are entitled to hold a voting seat on the board.”

Stakeholder Advisory Group: DACs may join the Stakeholder Advisory Group, which advises the Board of Directors. The Advisory Group is made up of individuals responsible for land use planning policy development and implementation, as well as DAC representatives. The Stakeholder Advisory Group is responsible for appointing two individuals and two alternates to serve on the Governing Board for a term of two years each. There is no fee to join the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Ability to Place Projects on an IRWM List. DACs who elect to join the Kaweah River Basin IRWM may submit a project to the Governing Board for consideration to be placed on the IRWM’s Project List. To join the Kaweah River Basin IRWM, DACs are to submit a request to the IRWM group to be added as a signatory to the MOU.

Recommendations to Improve DAC Engagement

These recommendations are tailored to each IRWM group based on the findings and feedback obtained during the meetings. It is recommended that the IRWM group review, prioritize, and implement the following DAC engagement and outreach recommendations. When IRWM boundaries were formed, there were DACs that fell outside the boundary of IRWM groups. To improve engagement of these white area DACs, several potential recommendations were developed based on the findings of the Assessment of Past and Present DAC Engagement and meetings with IRWM regions to review results of the Assessment.

Maintain an Updated DAC/SDAC Contact List: Maintain a contact list for the DACs/SDACs within the Kaweah River Basin IRWM to better conduct outreach and engage with these communities.

IRWM Educational Materials: Utilize bilingual educational materials already developed (e.g. Get to Know Your IRWM Factsheet and Tulare-Kern Funding Area DACIP Informational Sheet) to inform DAC representatives of the IRWM process. Develop new educational materials as needed for specific IRWM programs or opportunities.

Stipends/Sponsorship: Incentivize DACs by providing stipends/sponsorships for community members to attend meetings. Unlike IRWM group staff who may be paid to attend IRWM meetings, travel expenses and loss of work time can be a barrier to participation for DACs.

Set Aside Budget for DAC Engagement: Account for DAC outreach, engagement and translation services when establishing and approving operating budgets, enacting fees and/or applying for state funding.

Leverage DAC Successes from DACEEP Program: Because e-connectivity and e-mail use in rural communities is nominal, using alternative forms of communication is key to reaching DACs. Outreach methods that have had success include bilingual flyers and hosting community meetings.

Using Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for Outreach and DAC Contacts: Conduct community outreach and education activities to engage DACs and enable DACs to participate in water management planning.

Continue Assessment of Present DAC Participation in IRWM: Conduct yearly assessment of DAC participation (e.g., who is currently participating and who has previously obtained IRWM funding) to address and respond to possible participation barriers and/or interest in participating in IRWM related activities. The survey tool utilized through the DACEEP could be modified for an annual analysis.

Access Funding: The IRWM could help DACs access storm water funding, Groundwater remediation funding or other potential funding sources.

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