

DAC Engagement & Outreach Recommendations

Kings Basin Water Authority IRWM Group

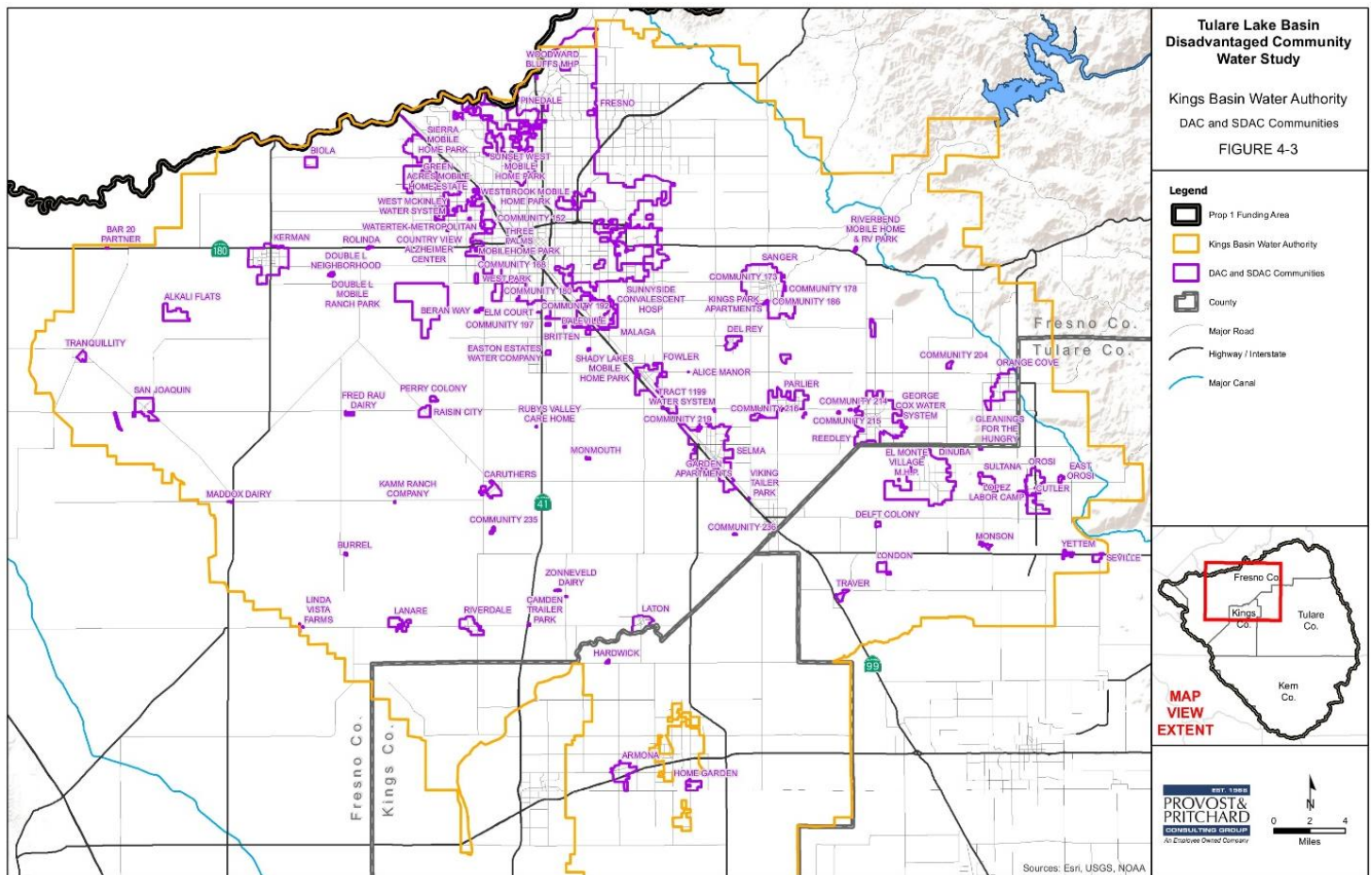
Objective

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 Kings Basin Water Authority 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 Kings Basin Water Authority IRWM region boundary:



Opportunities for DAC Participation

The Kings Basin Water Authority IRWM region has the following opportunities available for IRWM groups:

Kings Basin Stakeholder List: DACs and all interested stakeholders may request to be added to the Stakeholder list, which provides information on participation opportunities in the Kings Basin IRWM planning efforts.

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 Member. Only paying Members can join the Board. The cost is a one-time \$30,000 fee to cover past planning investments, such as the IRWMP development, and an annual due of \$7,000. Annual dues for a small city may be reduced to \$3,500. There is a three-step process to becoming a Member including submitting a written request to join, complete the Member/Interested Party questionnaire, and provide documentation of IRWM Plan (IRWMP) and Joint Powers Agreement adoption.

Advisory Committee: DACs may join the Advisory Committee as an Interested Party, which advises the Board of Directors. The Advisory Committee includes one representative from each Member and Interested Party. Each Member and Interested Party has one vote on the Committee. Committee meetings are open to the public and any individual is welcome to attend to voice their ideas and concerns. There is an annual voluntary Interested Party fee of \$250, but payment is not required. Many DACs, as Interested Parties of the Kings Basin Water Authority IRWM Group, participated in the development of Goals and Objectives for the IRWM Plan.

Disadvantaged Communities Work Group: The aim of this work group is to prepare grant applications for projects in DACs and perform studies intended to help DACs with water resources problems. The Work Groups present results from their work at regular Advisory Committee meetings. Any Member or Interested Party can volunteer to serve on a Work Group.

Interested Parties List: Interested Parties have an opportunity to provide direct input into nearly all Authority activities through committee and work group participation. Interested Parties can participate at no cost (Annual \$250 voluntary fee, but payment not required), but must complete a three-step process, including submitting a written request to join, complete the Member/Interested Party questionnaire, and provide documentation of IRWMP adoption or intent to adopt.

Ability to Place Projects on an IRWM List. DACs who elect to join the Authority as an Interested Party or Member may submit a project to the Governing Board for consideration to be placed on the IRWM's Project List.

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 KBWA 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.

Recommendations to Improve DAC Engagement (cont.)

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. Recommend holding meetings in Selma in the evenings given the previous experience with good attendance by DACs.

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.