

**APPLICATION OF THE
UPPER KINGS BASIN
WATER FORUM**

**FOR ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL OF
THE COMPOSITION OF ITS IRWM REGION INTO THE
CALIFORNIA IRWM PROGRAM**

APRIL 24, 2009

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April 24, 2009

State of California
Department of Water Resources
Division of Planning and Local Assistance
Attn. Ralph Svetich
Post Office Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Dear Mr. Svetich:

The Upper Kings Basin Water Forum (UKBWF) and Kings River Conservation District (KRCD) appreciate the opportunity to submit this application to secure official acceptance of UKBWF as a Regional Water Management Group (RWMG), whose regional composition and regional water management planning efforts are consistent with the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Program.

UKBWF first began in 2001 in the form of a Basin Advisory Panel (BAP) which was comprised of KRCD, Alta Irrigation District (AID), Consolidated Irrigation District (CID), and Fresno Irrigation District (FID), sought technical, facilitation, and financial support from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defined how they would work together to manage existing supplies and develop new supplies for the Kings Region. Over the following three years, the Panel was successful in deliberating a regional course of action, and was effective in its efforts to bring additional stakeholders to the table. In 2004, the BAP transitioned to what is today the UKBWF. That move was made for the purposes of coordinating regional water management activities, and to develop an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP). Joining the original BAP body in the transition were two (2) irrigation districts, ten (10) cities, and a comprehensive mélange of non-governmental organizations. Many of the details related to the UKBWF's structure, and water management objectives, are described in the attached Upper Kings Basin Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (as Appendix A), which was adopted by the UKBWF in July 2007. As testament to the effectiveness of the current IRWMP, a \$6-million Prop 50 grant was awarded in June 2008 for the construction of two groundwater recharge and banking projects outlined in the Plan.

The RWMG applying for regional acceptance herein provides an inclusionary, balanced and integrated approach to water management in the Kings Region. The UKBWF and KRCD share the IRWM Program vision, and look forward to implementing projects and programs to further the IRWM Program's goals and objectives. Should you have any questions regarding our application, or other concerns, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Dave Orth
General Manager, Kings River Conservation District

QUESTION 1 – CONTACT INFORMATION AND APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

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I, Dave Orth, General Manager of the Kings River Conservation District, hereby certify that the information included in and attached to this application for IRWM Regional Acceptance is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. Furthermore, UKBWF has authorized my submittal of this application for IRWM Regional Acceptance, pursuant to a January 2009 Steering Committee vote, and supported by administrative responsibilities outlined in the UKBWF IRWMP included herein as Appendix A.

Dave Orth, General Manager
Kings River Conservation District

QUESTION 2 – COMPOSITION OF THE REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT GROUP (RWMG)

This Section describes the water and land use agencies involved in the Water Forum and briefly discusses their statutory authorities. The participation of the groups was authorized by the governing bodies of the corresponding organizations. The roles and responsibilities of the regional agency, regional water management group, and land use agencies are discussed along with how the Water Forum operates and is organized.

Regional Water Management Agency

KRCD was created by the state legislature pursuant to the Kings River Conservation District Act and has regional authority and responsibilities consistent with the IRWMP goals for groundwater management, flood management, water quality preservation, environmental stewardship, and public information. The KRCD Act gives the agency the appropriate legal authority to serve as the regional water management entity, so KRCD currently prepares and submits all grant applications and enters into contract with the state on behalf of the Water Forum and Kings Region. KRCD's jurisdiction encompasses an area greater than the jurisdictional boundaries of any one local public agency in the region.

At the January 2005 Upper Kings Water Forum meeting, KRCD was chosen as the regional entity to be responsible for the development of the IRWMP in close coordination with the Forum. KRCD was also chosen to prepare and submit both the Planning Grant and Implementation Grant Applications under Proposition 50 and coordinate the implementation of the IRWMP.

KRCD has a "Policy Statement Governing Joint Development of Groundwater Recharge Facilities" that was adopted in 1991, updated in 1993, and used to guide how KRCD supports conjunctive use and groundwater recharge. KRCD also initiated the MOU with DWR that produced the initial assessment of the groundwater basin and conjunctive use potential and that resulted in a number of important studies.

Water Districts and Water Management Agencies

Pursuant to the Proposition 50 Chapter 8 IRWMP Grant Application Guidelines (DWR, 2004), the Water Forum includes KRCD and four legislatively defined special irrigation districts: Alta Irrigation District (AID), Consolidated Irrigation District (CID), Fresno Irrigation District (FID), and Raisin City Water District (RCWD). Each of the districts has specific powers and authorities, governance, electoral processes, funding mechanisms, and programs for its jurisdiction and is briefly described below. All these agencies have authority for managing and developing water supplies in their respective areas. AID, CID, and FID each have extensive water rights on the Kings River and have been actively operating conjunctive use projects in

their respective jurisdictional areas for decades. The RCWD does not have water rights on the Kings River or facilities to take delivery or distribute water and is reliant on groundwater to meet all demands.

Water districts and municipal water service providers located in the IRWMP area are shown in Appendix A, Figure 2-3. While there is no single groundwater management authority in the Kings Basin, groundwater management is practiced through conjunctive use programs implemented by individual districts or groups of districts in the basin.

Alta Irrigation District (AID)

AID was formed under the Wright Act, passed in 1887, and is one of the oldest irrigation districts in the state. AID provides surface water from the Kings River to farms in its 129,000-acre service area through a series of unlined canals. AID diverts water at Cobbles Weir into canals that transport water into a system that serves the area from Reedley to west of Orange Cove in eastern Fresno County, as well as serving the Dinuba, Orosi, and Traver areas of northern Tulare County. AID has 100,000 AF of storage in Pine Flat and 19,275 AF of storage in the other upstream reservoirs. In addition to providing surface water to meet irrigation demands, AID uses flood flows from the Kings River to recharge the groundwater basin. No estimate of the amount of water recharged through the basins is available. AID estimates it gets 45,600 AF of incidental recharge annually along its 360 miles of unlined irrigation delivery canals. AID has long recognized the significance of groundwater resources to the area and has been monitoring the water levels for the past 80 years. In August 1994, AID adopted an AB 3030 Groundwater Management Plan (GWMP) and is nearing completion of an update to the plan to meet SB 1938 requirements.

Consolidated Irrigation District (CID)

CID was organized on September 8, 1921, in accordance with the Irrigation District Law of the State of California Water Code. CID diverts water at the Gould and Fresno Weirs to provide surface water from the Kings River to farms within the service area of approximately 145,000 acres using a series of unlined canals. CID has 119,000 AF of storage in Pine Flat and another 22,937 AF in other upstream storage facilities. CID has been monitoring groundwater levels since the 1920s. The current groundwater monitoring program consists of about 80 wells spaced on a 2-mile grid throughout the district. In July 1995, the CID adopted an AB 3030 Groundwater Management Plan, and recently completed a plan update to meet SB 1938 requirements.

Fresno Irrigation District (FID)

FID was organized in 1920 as the successor to the privately owned Fresno Canal and Land Company in accordance with the Irrigation District Law of the State of California Water Code. FID has a service area of approximately 245,000 acres and diverts Kings River water from the Fresno Weir into the 680-mile canal and pipeline distribution system for both agricultural and municipal water uses. FID has rights to store 120,000 AF in Pine Flat reservoir and an additional 23,130 AF of storage in upstream reservoirs. This storage and its Kings River water allocation are used by FID to deliver an average annual supply of approximately 500,000 AF. FID obtains

most of its surface water supplies from the Kings River but also has a contract with the United States Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) for 75,000 AF of Class 2 water from the Friant Division of the CVP. In addition to its own Reclamation contract, FID has contractual agreements with the City of Fresno to take delivery of the City's 60,000 AF of Class 1 water and deliver it to the Leaky Acres recharge basins and other basins for groundwater recharge. FID is nearing completion of an update to its GWMP to meet SB 1938 requirements.

Raisin City Water District

The RCWD covers an area of approximately 49,400 acres and is primarily an agricultural area; it also includes the community of Raisin City. The RCWD is outside of the Kings River Water Association (KRWA) area and does not have surface water entitlement from the Kings River or water from the San Joaquin River. The RCWD is solely dependant on groundwater, pumped by individual growers, as the source of irrigation water. RCWD has updated its GWMP to meet SB 1938 requirements.

Land Use Planning Agencies – Incorporated Cities and Unincorporated Communities

The IRWMP Region overlaps parts of Fresno, Tulare, and Kings Counties. The incorporated cities, unincorporated communities, and county boundaries in the Kings Region are shown in Appendix A, Figure 2-3. City and County representatives from the planning or public works agencies actively participated in the Water Forum. These representatives provide a conduit to the elected bodies during the planning process. They also supported collection of important data and information and provided critical guidance during the planning process.

Integration of the prevailing land use with water supply plans and of the land use with the water planning process is an important strategy for the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP. Under California law, the management of land use is the responsibility of local government. City and county general plans and the associated goals, policies, objectives and programs define land use planning requirements for each jurisdiction. By law, general plans guide land use decisions at the city and county level and, by their very nature, are comprehensive and integrated across the full spectrum of land, water, and natural resources management elements. The breadth of the general plans may results in less detailed or comprehensive review of regional water issues.

The city and county general plans and the land use planning process are mechanisms for local governments to integrate land use and water supply decisions and meet the goals of the cities, counties, and the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP.

For the development of the IRWMP, the city and county information was critical for characterizing the historical and existing conditions in the Kings Region; documenting demand and supply conditions; formulating the assumptions for the future without project land use and water supply conditions; and developing and evaluating the project elements. The IRWMP planning process included necessary care to use data from the city and county land use agencies

to help ensure consistency between the IRWMP and land use plans, and thus minimize the potential for conflicts between the plans.

The cities and county agencies were consulted to obtain critical planning information, including general plans, sphere of influence maps, population forecasts, and urban water management plans, capital facility plans, and related documents. Available information was obtained and used. In addition, the Fresno and Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commissions were contacted for key data and to coordinate with the Municipal Service Review process when possible in order to avoid placing redundant burdens on the cities and special districts in the Kings Region.

In October 2006, Upper Kings Basin Water Forum Briefing Booklet was prepared and circulated to the land use and water agency boards and elected bodies. This booklet also included Agreements in Principle that were adopted by each of the participating land use jurisdictions and water agencies in the fall and early winter of 2006. The Agreements in Principle helped guide program and project development effort. Special districts within the IRWMP boundary which were invited to participate during the Forum's infancy, and declined, continue to be reached out to as the IRWM process moves forward.

DWR is recommending that land use planning be one of the water management strategies that should be included in an IRWMP. A review of the existing city and county general plans was conducted and a briefing was prepared to support discussion by the Land Use and Water Supply Work Group and the full Water Forum. The purpose of this memorandum was to document the review of City and County General Plan goals, objectives, policies, and programs. The review specifically evaluated how each general plan recognizes regional water resources issues; incorporates water management strategies; and how achievement of these goals could be supported by the IRWMP being developed by the Water Forum. The technical memorandum identifies the policy "drivers" that provide a basis for integrating land use and water supply plans and planning process.

Forum Operations and Organization

A Planning and Steering Committee (PSC) is in place to coordinate the Water Forum and provide direct oversight to IRWMP development and implementation. The PSC includes representatives from the KRCD, AID, CID, FID, Fresno County, designated city and county representatives, and other local stakeholders. The City of Dinuba represents disadvantaged communities on the PSC. The PSC ensures that the input from the Water Forum is used appropriately to guide and direct Upper Kings Basin efforts. Four work groups have also been formed to focus on specific work tasks or issues. These work groups and roles include the:

- © Technical Analysis and Data Work Group: coordinate development of the data and technical analysis approach, evaluate modeling program strategy, assist in capture of

interagency and interdisciplinary data, and provide input to the model development and analysis.

- ⊗ Outreach and Community Affairs Work Group: develop and implement the Outreach and Community Affairs plan and coordinate the public outreach efforts.
- ⊗ Financing and Economics Work Group: review project costs, financing strategy, cost sharing, and impact and benefits analysis.
- ⊗ Plan and Project Inventory Work Group: coordinate identification, discussion, and analysis of water management strategies, develop program ranking criteria, identify potential or proposed projects, support inventory of plans, policies and other programs that will influence the IRWMP development and implementation.

During the IRWMP development process a number of ad hoc work groups were formed to focus on specific tasks or activities. The work groups and responsibilities included:

- ⊗ Land Use and Water Supply Work Group: evaluate existing general plans and policy language and coordinate development of a strategy in this area. This group also sponsored a specific workshop on this subject that involved planners from all of the cities in the area.
- ⊗ Public Infrastructure Work Group: solicit participation from city public works staff, and county service areas or districts to review the water quality baseline report, develop a water quality infrastructure position and strategy for the IRWMP, and identify drinking water and wastewater treatment facility needs.
- ⊗ Environmental Stakeholders Work Group: identify environmental enhancement projects and develop design requirements for recharge facilities that would provide environmental benefits.

DWR has provided funding for facilitation services of the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP), which has been instrumental in organizing and coordinating the Water Forum during its formation and development of the initial IRWMP strategy and throughout the planning and implementation process.

Coordination and Cooperation with Local, State, and Federal Agencies

The IRWMP development process provides for coordination and cooperation with the relevant local, state, and federal agencies in relevant plan components through the Water Forum. As mentioned before, the participation in the Water Forum is open to all. In addition to the representatives from local entities, the representatives from other state and regional agencies attend the Water Forum meetings. In addition to DWR, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) provide input and guidance to Water Forum.

KRCD is the lead for coordinating interagency technical input through the Technical Analysis and Data Work Group. Specific groups or committees of the various work groups have been

and will continue to be engaged during the IRWMP implementation. For example, local and regional experts with knowledge of hydrogeology and geology participated in the development of the conceptual hydrogeology and calibration of the Kings Basin Integrated Groundwater and Surface water Model (Kings IGSM). In addition, CDFG and local environmental organizations have worked to develop the fishery management plan for the Kings River below Pine Flat Dam and guidelines, which influenced the design of recharge basins. It is expected that these agencies will continue to provide input and help to identify areas of special biological significance, coordinate resources agency input, and identify opportunities for coordinating input during environmental review and development of additional water management strategies that incorporate environmental benefits and habitat considerations.

Current Participation in the UKBWF

Entities presently attending UKBWF meetings and who have adopted the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP are listed in Appendix B.

QUESTION 3 – STAKEHOLDER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Stakeholder Procurement and Participation

The Water Forum was open to all stakeholders of the Kings Basin during the development of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP and stakeholder involvement has been an important component of the success of the IRWMP. The Water Forum process started in 2004 and included sending open invitation to all local water and land use agencies, regional agencies, cities, counties, and environmental groups located within or with ties to the Kings Basin to join the Water Forum. Throughout the planning process, the local, state, and federal resource and regulatory agencies, landowners, and the public were invited to Water Forum meetings in order to be inclusive and obtain a wide range of perspectives. The agencies and public have been provided the opportunity to review, address, comment upon, and to provide input to the process.

In 2005, with the support of the Education and Community Affairs Work Group, the Public Outreach and Community Affairs Strategy was prepared to outline the stakeholder coordination process. The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP, along with the Public Outreach and Community Affairs Strategy, are living documents coordinated by the Water Forum with support to be provided by KRCD.

The following goals were developed for the communications strategy:

1. Brand the Water Forum as a regional entity addressing water reliability and quality and agricultural, urban and natural resource needs.
2. Educate the public about the region's water resources issues.
3. Promote an IRWMP to gain support for water management strategies being considered by the Water Forum.
4. Mobilize the electorate to vote on projects that improve regional water reliability and quality.

It was necessary to transform the strategic objectives for public outreach into a message that could be conveyed through appropriate tools and media. The messages were crafted in terms laypersons would understand and conveyed the nature and extent of the overdraft, defined the role for the Water Forum, and communicated the purpose of the IRWMP. It was planned that the Water Forum's public outreach effort would utilize a combined approach of community relations and mixed media to reach the target audiences. The tools identified included:

- ◎ Stakeholder Meetings;
- ◎ Speakers' Bureau;
- ◎ Community Relations;
- ◎ Editorial and Media Relations;
- ◎ Long Format Video;

- ◎ Website; and
- ◎ Printed Materials.

During the first two and a half years of implementing the outreach effort several of the tools identified were used. Most of the efforts made were geared toward decision-making audiences to assist the Water Forum with the adoption of resolutions and to provide support for funding requests.

In the course of the planning process, in total, the Water Forum met 14 times with attendance ranging from 16 to 25 persons. Forum members informed the respective elected bodies at regularly noticed public meetings as incremental progress was made during development of the IRWMP. Special efforts were made in working to adopt the Principles-of-Agreement in support of the IRWMP. The general managers of each of the water districts attended meetings of the other stakeholder decision making bodies to explain the need and purpose for the IRWMP and Principles-of-Agreement.

In accordance with the Outreach and Community Affairs Plan, numerous special meetings or workshops were conducted prior to adoption of the IRWMP and a host of work group or subcommittee meetings were used to address specific topics.

Stakeholder Meetings

During the planning process, numerous stakeholder meetings were conducted with elected and governmental officials along with group meetings with representatives from agricultural, urban and environmental representatives as summarized:

- ◎ Sub-Committees (total of 46 meetings, average number of attendees ranged from 4 to 30):
 - ◎ Planning and Steering Committee (15 meetings);
 - ◎ Technical Analysis and Data Work Group (9 meetings);
 - ◎ Water District General Managers Committee (10 meetings);
 - ◎ Environmental Stakeholders Work Group (3 meetings);
 - ◎ Land Use and Water Supply Committee (5 meetings); and
 - ◎ Education Committee (4 meetings).
- ◎ Workshops: total of 5 workshops with approximately 100 attendees:
 - ◎ Public Works Workshop on Water Quality and Infrastructure;
 - ◎ Planners Workshop to Review General Plans and Integrate Land Use and Water Supply Planning; and
 - ◎ Public Meetings (1 each in AID, CID, and FID service areas to orient the public and local decision makers).

Disadvantaged Communities

A process for identifying and including disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the development of the Kings IRWMP was based on the criteria defined in CWC § 79505.5(a). The CWC identifies “a community with an annual median household income (MHI) that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual MHI” as disadvantaged. The Water Forum used Census 2000 data and 80 percent of the statewide annual MHI of \$37,994. The total population for the Region was determined using Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF-3), file GCT-P14, Income and Poverty in 1999: 2000. The resulting map of DAC is shown in Appendix A, Figure 3-9. DACs have an annual MHI of \$37,994. Table 3-14 (Appendix A) lists the unincorporated areas that fall under the category of disadvantaged community. This includes population and income data for the portion of the Region that lies within Fresno and Tulare counties. The projects needs of DACs are discussed further in Chapter 8 of the IRWMP (Appendix A).

Water Forum undertook proactive steps to ensure inclusion of the disadvantaged communities’ needs and interests in the planning process of the IRWMP and in the regional project definitions. After the disadvantaged communities’ representatives were identified, the Water Forum extended an invitation to attend the Water Forum meetings. Meeting minutes and educational materials were made available to the representatives to help them become familiar with the Water Forum’s efforts in developing the IRWMP. The opportunity to join the Water Forum was also extended to interested disadvantaged communities. Several cities that met the criteria for disadvantaged communities, such as, the cities of Dinuba, Fowler, Kerman, Parlier, and Selma, joined the Water Forum. The disadvantaged communities, as members of the Water Forum, participated in the development of the goals and objectives for the IRWMP.

Additional outreach efforts targeted underrepresented communities that were unincorporated such as Biola, Cutler-Orosi, Raisin City and others. The disadvantaged communities of Cutler-Orosi and Raisin City (represented by Raisin City Water District) joined the efforts in defining the process of meeting the goals of the IRWMP. The water issues affecting the disadvantaged community of Culter-Orosi are the primary issues that would be addressed by an IRWMP priority project sponsored by the Alta Irrigation District. The RCWD sponsored a long-term project identified in the IRWMP to meet local water issues. In addition, the RCWD committed a funding contribution toward the efforts of developing the IRWMP.

For the DAC communities that remained unrepresented, the Water Forum recruited the services of Self-Help Enterprises, Tulare County, to identify and provide needs assessment of the unincorporated disadvantaged communities. The results of the needs assessment can be found in Appendix A, Table 8-3.

QUESTION 4 – PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

As discussed in the response to Question 3, above, the Water Forum was open to all stakeholders of the Kings Basin, including the general public, during the development of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP. In addition to outreach methods listed in the Question 3 response, the Water Forum also employs the following outreach tools:

Local Newsletters

Local newsletters are utilized to inform and educate residents, businesses, and elected officials about Water Forum activities. The following are examples:

- ◎ KRCD News, Winter 2006/2007 Issue – “Water Forum Looking For Grant Funding”;
- and
- ◎ KRCD News, Fall 2006 Issue – “Upper Kings Basin Water Forum Progresses With Regional Planning For Projects”.

KRCD’s newsletter is mailed to over 8,500 residents within KRCD’s service area.

Editorial and Media Relations

Key reporters for local papers are periodically updated about Water Forum activities resulting in several stories in the Fresno Bee. The following are examples:

- ◎ The Fresno Bee, Local & State section, Group touts 4 water projects;
- ◎ The Fresno Bee, Local & State section, Fresno Co. may catalog water supply (Benjamin, 2005b);
- ◎ The Fresno Bee, Local & State section, Agencies to tap sources for water (Benjamin, 2005a); and
- ◎ The Fresno Bee: Local & State section, Group takes regional course (Upper Kings Water Forum is formed.) (Pollock, 2004).

Printed Materials

Printed materials were developed to support educational efforts. Approximately 1,000 educational materials have been distributed during speaker’s bureaus and workshops and other events. The following are examples:

- ◎ Nov. 2005 – Hydrologic Modeling of the Kings Groundwater Basin /A White Paper (14-page book);
- ◎ Aug. 2006 – Upper Kings Basin Water Forum and the Upper Kings Integrated Water Management Plan (2-page overview);

- © Oct. 2006 – Position Statement/Principles: Integrated Water Quality and Sustainable Infrastructure Program for Clean and Safe Water (6-page document); and
- © Nov. 2006 – Upper Kings Basin Water Forum – Briefing Booklet (40-page book).

The community relations and public outreach strategy will be updated with the Prop 84 update of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP. Additional message points will be developed to assist in communicating the key issues identified in the IRWMP and role of the Water Forum in regional solutions.

In addition, those tasks identified in the Water Forum's communications strategy for the latter part of 2007 and for 2008 and 2009 will be modified to focus on immediate and long-term goals including those related to the formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) as the governance structure for the Water Forum. An increased focus on educating the general public has been recently implemented to take advantage of the heightened awareness by residents of local water supplies due to the drought conditions that the region is currently experiencing.

QUESTION 5 – GOVERNANCE AND FACILITATION OF OPERATIONS

The Water Forum has taken the initiative to bring together the different interests in the Kings Region to better communicate, collaborate, and cooperate in solving regional issues that are beyond the capacity of any one entity to address. The Water Forum has recognized that all of the stakeholders in the region, whether public agencies or non-governmental organizations, have unique perspectives and that all of the individual interests need to be recognized if the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP is to be successful. The Water Forum will continue its quest to bring together the plans of public agencies, as well as input from non-governmental organizations, and provide oversight and management structure for institutional involvement and multi-stakeholder participation.

A Planning and Steering Committee (PSC) is in place to coordinate the Water Forum and provide leadership and direct oversight to IRWMP development and implementation. The PSC ensures that the input from the Water Forum is used appropriately to guide and direct Upper Kings Basin efforts. The Committee includes representatives from the KRCD, AID, CID, FID, Fresno County, designated city and county representatives, and other local stakeholder groups. The City of Dinuba represents disadvantaged communities. Committee members were selected through an open election by the Forum, and candidacy was open to all Forum members.

As identified in Appendix A, Sections 2.2.6 and 10.2.2, the Water Forum has elected to develop a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to include the signatories of the original MOU. The JPA will be used to formalize governance and financing of the IRWMP management actions. A subcommittee of the Water Forum was formed to develop a draft JPA agreement to circulate to the elected bodies for adoption. The JPA agreement is currently being considered for adoption by the public agencies within the Water Forum.

Establishment of IRWM Plan Goals and Objectives

The Water Forum worked through the fall of 2003 and winter of 2004 to identify priority problems and issues, and generate a consensus on the purpose and need for the IRWMP. A number of existing information sources, as listed below, were reviewed during this process:

- ◎ The original MOU adopted in May 2001 by the DWR, KRCD, AID, CID, and FID;
- ◎ The Water Forum Concept Paper (2004);
- ◎ Basin Assessment Report (WRIME, 2003b); and
- ◎ IRWMP Guidelines (DWR, 2004).

On the basis of the above review, the Water Forum members developed the IRWMP goals, regional planning objectives, and specific water management objectives for the region. These goals and objectives were adopted at the February 2004 Water Forum meeting. These were

forwarded to each of the stakeholder groups for consideration before adopting the Resolution of Support for the IRWMP.

Project Screening and Prioritization

Screening duties are conducted by the Scoring Committee. Two levels of screening are conducted for submitted projects. The first-level screening is conducted to identify whether a project had any fatal flaw in terms of meeting the DWR standards and to determine if the project proponents provided enough information to be fully evaluated using the ranking and prioritization criteria adopted by the Water Forum.

The first criterion of the first-level screening is to determine if the project information was complete; if the project proponent had an UWMP; and if the project was ready to proceed and would help the Kings Region to be competitive for funding. The second criterion is to determine if two or more water management strategies were integrated and to evaluate if the project would meet at least one of the IRWMP goals. Appendix A, Table 8-1 shows how the individual projects are related to the IRWMP goals and which of the DWR water management strategies are integrated into the project. The third criterion is to determine if a project's cost and schedule are completely defined. The screening is conducted to distinguish immediate term, near-term, and "ready to proceed" projects.

It is important to note that no projects have been eliminated from inclusion in the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP. Even if a project does not pass the first screening and receives a lower priority rating, it may still be important to the long-term success of Kings Region and for meeting the IRWMP goals and objectives. The assignment of lower priority indicates that the project proponents need to develop the project concepts further, conduct needed feasibility evaluations, develop project designs, identify additional sponsors, or perfect local funding.

The second level of screening involves applying the Water Forum project ranking and prioritization criteria. The purpose is to define firmly the immediate and near-term projects that are ready to proceed and would help the Kings Region compete for available grant funding.

Priority is given to projects that seek to maximize outcomes and benefits by incorporating multiple water management strategies. As part of the first screening process, only those with 2 or more water management strategies are considered. Due to the cumulative benefits of incorporating multiple water management strategies, compared to a single strategy alternative, additional scoring and consideration is possible in the project ranking for projects that include more water management strategies. Thus, those projects with multiple water management strategies are given priority consideration when seeking funding for implementation.

Further details of the project scoring process can be found in Appendix A, Section 8.1

Financing of Activities

Potential project funding sources, programs, and project partnerships available from federal, state, and local sources were discussed by the Projects Work Group, PSC, and Water Forum. The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP documents the local funding and financing sources and potential strategies. Current funding approaches for the overlying irrigation districts and land use agencies (cities and counties) are briefly discussed in Appendix A, Section 10.2.1, to identify funding and financing opportunities for Upper Kings Basin IRWMP projects and programs.

The funding sources, agreements, and mechanisms will vary depending on the program or project; source of funds; how costs and benefits are distributed; and other political and economic variables. The development of new water supplies and the necessary infrastructure is a major financial undertaking that may require debt service.

Local resources need to be dedicated to implement projects and programs identified in the IRWMP and match state and federal grant monies; and provide for the long term maintenance and operations of project and the common program elements. State and federal grants may provide an opportunity to fund some activities, such as planning, feasibility study, and design work, but some programs such as monitoring and annual reporting require ongoing, stable funding from local sources. Low-interest loans may be available for capitalizing new facilities, acquiring land, and constructing projects, but local money would still be needed to retire debt and for long term operations and maintenance.

The IRWMP member agencies have identified local revenue to leverage outside funding from state and federal programs. The distribution of costs and benefits will be documented through programmatic engineering and economic evaluations. Where necessary within each of the jurisdictions, elections are to be held to seek approval for necessary assessments and fees. Increasing benefits assessments or fees by the overlying water or irrigation districts, or the land use agencies may require further studies and a special election pursuant to state law as defined by Proposition 218.

Plan Implementation

Implementation decision-making is presently the responsibility of the PSC. Due to the diversity of the interested parties comprising the PSC, a majority vote of PSC would address regional issues. It is incumbent upon the Steering Committee to assess implementation items and schedule.

IRWMP Revisions

IRWMP revisions are currently directed by the PSC. Once formed, the Water Forum JPA will include the process for updating and revising the IRWMP as circumstances change. The

pending Proposition 84 funding cycle also provides a “driver” to update the plan, expanding the IRWMP boundary to encompass the western portion of the Kings Groundwater Basin.

Hiring & Managing Consultants

Securing technical and legal consultation is the responsibility of the PSC. The Water Forum presently retains WRIME for ongoing IRWM consultation. However, the Steering Committee reserves the option to open up for competitive bid future tasks, such as updates to the IRWMP and Kings IGSM.

QUESTION 6 – DELINEATION OF A PRACTICAL RWMG BOUNDARY

The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP Region was developed on the basis of following considerations:

1. Physical and hydrological conditions;
2. Groundwater basin boundaries;
3. Jurisdictional authorities;
4. Ongoing regional partnerships; and
5. Potential for achieving more benefits by operating as a region.

These factors are briefly described below.

Physical and Hydrological Conditions

The physical hydrography of the area is a natural basis for defining the IRWMP Region. The Kings River is the major source of surface water in Kings Basin. The region is reliant on surface water supplies derived primarily from the Kings River. Pine Flat Reservoir regulates the flow on the Kings River and provides storage, flood control, and recreational benefits. The Kings River is a natural river along much of its upper reaches, while its lower reaches have been extensively re-channeled and include many weirs, diversion structures, and levees.

The San Joaquin River defines the northern boundary of the IRWMP Region. It is a source of both surface water supply and groundwater recharge in the Kings Basin, as defined by DWR Bulletin 118, Update 2003. Both the City of Fresno and FID have water entitlements from the Central Valley Project (CVP) Friant Unit and diverts San Joaquin River water into the area via the Friant-Kern Canal. Some CVP flood water is also utilized intermittently by the City of Fresno and other irrigation districts.

An extensive network of canals is used to deliver water to agricultural lands and to existing groundwater recharge facilities. Although the weirs, diversion structures, canals, and recharge facilities are managed by different local and regional water agencies, they are all part of a single interconnected physical and hydrologic system. As a result, the defined IRWMP Region has a sound physical and hydrologic basis.

Groundwater Basin Boundaries

The Kings Basin is a large groundwater basin located in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley groundwater basin in the Central Valley of California. The groundwater basin covers an area of 1,530 square miles. DWR estimated that the groundwater storage for the entire Kings Basin is about 93 million acre-feet (AF) to a depth of more than 1,000 feet. The Upper Kings Basin, consisting of AID, CID, and FID, accounts for a large percentage of the groundwater pumping in the region. The Upper Kings Basin has a total groundwater storage capacity of 35

million AF to an average depth of about 500 feet. The groundwater storage in the Lower Kings Basin is estimated to be about 44 million AF to an average depth of about 1,000 feet.

There are many land owners and multiple local and regional water agencies and irrigation districts that overlie the Kings Groundwater Basin. This means that the actions of a groundwater user or an overlying land owner may have an effect on all the other water users. The San Joaquin and Kings Rivers are hydraulically connected with the underlying groundwater basin and are major sources of recharge.

The current IRWMP Region, as defined above, includes the majority of the Kings Groundwater Basin. As a result, the UKBWF has developed an integrated hydrologic model to encompass the entire groundwater basin, which includes the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP boundary. The model facilitates the evaluation of IRWMP projects with potential benefits to the entire groundwater basin.

Jurisdictional Authorities

The success of an IRWMP depends on the participation of those agencies that have jurisdictional authority to implement the plan. Therefore, jurisdictional authority is used as an important basis for defining the boundary of the IRWMP Region. Both land use and water supply authorities are needed to effectively develop and implement the plan and, as such, the Water Forum includes representatives from the overlying counties, incorporated cities, and the water districts and agencies. Figure 2-2 in the UKBWF IRWMP shows the water and irrigation districts in the IRWMP Region. These districts include the majority of agricultural water users (water districts or ditch companies) with rights and entitlements to the Kings River. These water districts also represent most of the groundwater users of the Kings Basin.

The IRWMP Region includes Divisions 1, 2, and 3 of KRCD, as previously shown in Figure 2-1. KRCD is a political subdivision of the state created by the California Legislature with the passage of the Kings River Conservation District Act in 1951. The principal reason for the formation of KRCD was the need for one overall public agency to act on behalf of the entire Kings River service area to:

- ◎ Safeguard local water rights;
- ◎ Negotiate and contract with the United States for the use of and storage space in Pine Flat Reservoir for irrigation purposes; and
- ◎ To plan, finance, construct, and operate hydroelectric power plants on the Kings River.

KRCD is the operator of the lower Kings River flood control project. The project is along the southwestern and western edges of the IRWMP area and is represented by the Upper Kings IRWMP. KRCD also monitors water quality in the lower Kings River under the Regional Board's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. The Kings River is an impaired water body, and KRCD monitors pH, molybdenum, and toxaphene levels.

Raisin City Water District, a member agency within KRCD Division 4, is part of the IRWMP Region; but other local agencies in Division 4 opted not to join the Water Forum at the time of formation. However, most of these local water agencies are interested in participating in the intended expansion of the IRWMP area to cover the entire Kings Groundwater Basin.

KRWA, a member of the Water Forum, is a private association of the major water rights holders on the Kings River and serves as the water master to administer water rights and entitlements. KRWA also manages conservation storage in the Pine Flat Dam, located approximately 10 miles to the east of the Kings Groundwater Basin in the Sierra Foothills.

Ongoing Regional Partnerships

The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP Region is defined with full recognition to the need for supporting and leveraging ongoing regional partnerships. In 2001, the KRCD, AID, CID, and FID signed a MOU with the DWR to coordinate data collection, field pilot studies, and water resources planning activities. The proposed IRWMP is synergistic with this MOU partnership due to common elements of planning. The IRWMP Region is larger than the region encompassed by this MOU partnership and includes other agencies within the physical and hydrological boundaries of the Kings Basin.

KRWA and KRCD, two key participants in the IRWMP effort, are participating in the Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition (SSJWQC), which was established in 2002. This partnership facilitates the evaluation and analysis of both data and policy matters on water quality issues for the purposes of IRWMP development.

In 2005, Stakeholders in the Lower Kings Basin completed the public review draft of the Lower Kings Basin Groundwater Management Plan (WRIME, 2005a). It was adopted by KRCD, and is supported or has been adopted by the water supply entities in the Lower Kings Region. This GWMP integrates six previously prepared GWMPs to better reflect the hydrogeologic and management conditions in the area. A stakeholder-driven process, coordinated through a Lower Kings Basin Advisory Panel and consisting of water district and ditch company representatives, provided oversight to plan development. There are other existing and more localized cooperative efforts within the Lower Kings Basin, such as the McMullin Group and the North Fork Group (NFG).

KRCD is supporting these groups and will coordinate the IRWMP effort with these groups as needed. The Lower Kings Basin agencies and interests are also invited to join the Water Forum and the IRWMP effort.

Potential for Achieving More Benefits by Operating as a Region

A key criterion for defining the IRWMP Region is the potential to achieve greater benefits by operating as a region. As mentioned before, the management of the water resources in the Kings Basin has been locally driven by overlying water agencies and individual water users.

However, an overdraft problem in an expansive and interconnected groundwater basin cannot be effectively managed by local measures and actions taken individually by overlying users. In addition, a comprehensive exploration of water resources management alternatives requires an integrated look at the entire watershed and groundwater basin beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of any single local agency. Since the defined IRWMP Region is hydrologically and physically interconnected, it is logical to conclude that there are multiple opportunities for achieving greater benefits by operating as a region. The anticipated regional benefits were presented in the Anticipated Regional vs. Local Benefits section of the UKBWF IRWMP.

QUESTION 7 – OVERVIEW OF WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE REGION

Kings Basin IRWM Background

The Kings Groundwater Basin (Kings Basin) is primarily an agricultural area, which uses both surface water and groundwater for irrigation purposes. The two primary sources of surface water for Kings Basin are:

- ⊙ Kings River; and
- ⊙ San Joaquin River via Friant-Kern Canal, a component of the Central Valley Project (CVP).

These two surface water sources are not sufficient to meet the water demand in the Kings Basin. Therefore, the water districts in the area have been managing the available surface water and groundwater supplies through conjunctive use.

Due to insufficiency of surface water supplies, the Kings Basin has been operating under overdraft conditions for many years, with an average annual overdraft of approximately 100,000 to 150,000 acre-feet. According to Bulletin 118 (DWR, 2003a), the groundwater in storage in Kings Basin was about 93 million acre-feet in 1961; this estimate of storage was to a depth of 1,000 feet or less. It is also estimated that about 10 million acre-feet of groundwater was mined from the Kings groundwater basin during the past 50 years of operation.

The continued groundwater overdraft and the urban growth pressure in the region call for improved water resources management in the Kings Basin. Historically, the management of the water resources has been limited to independent operations by overlying local water agencies and individual water users. It is recognized that piecemeal planning constrains the potential for solution of the region's most pressing issues and increases the potential for competition and conflict over the available water supplies. As a result, local agencies initiated a process of regional cooperation in 2001 to address the overdraft problem and develop implementable solutions. Kings River Conservation District (KRCD), Alta Irrigation District (AID), Consolidated Irrigation District (CID), and Fresno Irrigation District (FID) formed a Basin Advisory Panel (BAP), sought technical, facilitation, and financial support from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defined how they would work together to manage existing supplies and develop new supplies for the Kings Region. This water management group is formed pursuant to the IRWMP standards and guidelines.

The BAP made significant progress by working together to define the water resources problems but realized that the involvement of other stakeholders in the basin would be necessary if regional solutions were to be developed. As a result of these early efforts, the water districts solicited wider stakeholder participation and the Upper Kings Water Forum (Water Forum) was

formed in 2004 to coordinate water resources planning in the Upper Kings Basin Region (Kings Region). The Water Forum embarked on developing an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) for the Kings Region to improve water management, reduce conflicts, protect water quality, and ensure sustainable resources management through regional cooperation. The objective of the IRWMP is to identify and define different water management scenarios for the Kings Basin and evaluate alternatives to determine the most economical and best use of the water resources of the region as a whole.

The Kings Region spans over parts of three counties: Fresno, Kings, and Tulare. The Water Forum planning process includes city and county governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. This diverse range of perspectives has been valuable in developing a consensus and selecting water management strategies for inclusion in the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP.

The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP is the outcome of a two-year collaborative planning and facilitated process that included completion of a wide range of technical studies, preparation of briefings and technical memorandums, development of the Kings Basin Integrated Groundwater and Surface water Model (Kings IGSM), extensive stakeholder involvement and community affairs process, and numerous meetings among various work groups and Water Forum participants. The local funding for these efforts was supplemented by a Proposition 50 Planning Grant and other technical assistance grants from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

IRWMP: Balancing Regional Interests to Achieve a Common Goal

The Water Forum adopted a vision statement to ensure a common view of the future among all members. This vision set the direction of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP and guided the collaborative planning and decision-making process. The IRWMP defines issues, guiding principles, regional goals, objectives, strategies, actions, and projects to enhance the beneficial uses of water for the Kings Region and ensure the sustainability of the water supply.

The Water Forum has taken the initiative to bring together the different interests in the Kings Region to better communicate, collaborate, and cooperate in solving regional issues that are beyond the capacity of any one entity to address. The Water Forum has recognized that all of the stakeholders in the region, whether public agencies or non-governmental organizations, have unique perspectives and that all of the individual interests need to be recognized if the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP is to be successful.

Participating entities must continue to recognize and support the concept that regional integration will enhance their ability to manage their operations and collective resources, will increase their water supply reliability, and will provide a framework to improve water management across the region. More importantly, all participating entities should be assured that by participating in a regional integrated water management program, they will not lose

opportunities to control their own future nor will they lose their autonomy. Regional integration does not seek to diminish the individual purveyor's decision-making power or a local government's power to exercise its rights. Instead, it seeks to enhance the collective power of the local entities and the ability to manage their resources. Participating entities are also able to address water management issues on a much larger scale through an integrated planning framework.

The Water Forum sought to bring together the plans of the public agencies and provide oversight and management structure for institutional involvement and multi-stakeholder participation. Many of the plans are based on the statutory authorities of the various agencies involved. The success of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP also depends on the participation of those agencies that have jurisdictional authority to implement the plan.

By working with varied interests and agendas, the IRWMP planning process has opened the doors for partnerships, funding opportunities, operational connectivity, and increased awareness of planning efforts, projects and opportunities. In developing regional plans and prioritizing multi-benefit projects, it is important not only to coordinate efforts with other planning agencies within the region, but also to coordinate across regional boundaries, and the Water Forum is working towards building bridges with surrounding regional efforts.

The Water Forum has brought together an enormous amount of information and has facilitated communication concerning complex and controversial issues. Not all of these issues were addressed in the first attempt at developing an IRWMP, but the Water Forum and the integrated planning framework are expected to provide an ongoing mechanism for resolving conflicts within which water agencies, regulators, and environmental groups can talk, identify common problems and concerns, and work together to find solutions. The Water Forum is prepared to address the continuing challenges related to coordinating groups with widely differing missions, agendas, and interests. The IRWMP implementation cannot succeed without continuous review and modification to meet new and unanticipated challenges.

QUESTION 8 – INTERREGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Impacts and Benefits to Adjacent Areas

The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP may influence adjacent areas to the north, south and west. To the north, Madera County is experiencing rapid urban growth. Continued overdraft in the Kings Region, including the Lower Kings area, will influence the cross county flows and could result in inter-county conflicts if the IRWMP is not implemented. These transboundary effects would be reduced through IRWMP projects. Both Madera County and the Kings Region are likely to benefit by the additional groundwater recharge that will occur incidental to the San Joaquin Restoration projects.

To the west, overdraft in the Lower Kings is likely to continue and this problem would be made worse if the IRWMP is not fully implemented. It is hoped the planned geopolitical inclusion of the western area of the Kings Basin (North Fork Area) and participation by its stakeholders will improve planning and implementation efforts in that region. It is also important to note that if the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP projects are implemented, it is likely that the Lower Kings would receive uncompensated benefits from the additional recharge in the Upper Kings Region. This inequity could result in conflicts since benefits could accrue to non-funding participants.

There has been anecdotal information provided that indicates that there may be poor quality water to the west and southwest of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP that could be drawn into the Kings Basin if water levels remain at their currently depressed levels, but it was beyond the scope of this project to collect historical water quality data or samples. To the south of the project area, south of the Kings River, the proposed projects are believed to be relatively neutral in their effects.

Regional Boundaries and White Areas

Factors considered in defining The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP boundary are outlined in Question 6 above. The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP boundary is contiguous and does not contain any “white areas”, or in other words, areas not represented by this or any other RWMG. However, white areas do exist outside of the current IRWMP boundary, primarily, the North Fork Area of the Kings River. Stakeholders in the North Fork Area primarily coordinate water-related efforts through the North Fork Group (NFG). The NFG’s contribution to the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP through its involvement in The Lower Kings Basin Groundwater Management Plan (LKGWMP), and its expected future involvement in Basin-wide planning and implementation efforts are explained below.

The Upper Kings Basin IRWMP does not share overlapping areas with any neighboring RWMG.

Relationship to Other Regional Efforts

The Water Forum support local primacy in the planning process and a “bottoms- up” approach to water management while also recognizing the other regional resource management effort in the Kings Basin and Southern San Joaquin Valley, including the Tulare Basin, and the relationship to the State’s effort. In the long term, participation and coordination of with these efforts will support the implementation of the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP by leveraging the synergy of work approaches and coordinating all work products. Figure 9-7 (Appendix A) shows how other planning efforts in the Kings Region are integrated and how the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP fits into the other large scale efforts. In addition, these complementary regional efforts help the Water Forum in prioritizing regional goals for the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP. A brief description of the key regional efforts is given below.

SOUTHERN SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WATER QUALITY COALITION

Kings River Water Association (KRWA) and KRCD are participating in the Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition (SSJWQC), which was established in 2002. The SSJWQC was formed to deal with water quality issues and concerns affecting the Kings River area and the Tulare Lake Basin. The SSJWQC participating agencies believe that they will be better served approaching these and other water quality issues on a regional approach rather than individually.

THE LOWER KINGS BASIN GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (LKGWMP)

The Lower Kings Basin Groundwater Management Plan (LKGWMP) was completed by KRCD in 2005 and the Basin Management Objectives (BMOs) from this effort are incorporated into the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP. Two other localized groups, the McMullin Group and North Fork Group (NFG) were active in the Lower Kings Basin Action Plan (LKBAP) and coordinated input to the GWMP. The NFG is working to develop conjunctive use and recharge projects under an MOU with DWR. KRCD will work to support both groups in identifying capital facilities and programs that would provide regional benefit, and will keep the Lower Kings Basin stakeholders informed of opportunities provided through the IRWMP. It is also anticipated that the Lower Kings stakeholders, via the LKBAP, may appoint a representative to the Forum to support the implementation of the IRWMP efforts and develop programs over an even wider region.

TULARE LAKE BASIN

The Kings Region is in the Tulare Lake Basin. There are a number of other local IRWMP efforts in the Tulare Lake Basin that need to be factored into the Upper Kings Basin IRWMP implementation strategy. Integration with these efforts is necessary by virtue of the requirements and approach to be used by the State to distribute Proposition 84 IRWMP related funding. Upper Kings Basin IRWMP representatives from KRCD and AID have been meeting with others in the Tulare Lake Basin to discuss strategies for combining efforts and setting project funding priorities. A Joint Powers Authority is being considered to integrate the other independent efforts listed below. However, some of the participating parties favor an MOU, as

opposed to a JPA, to coordinate activities. It is not known how interests within the Tulare Basin will ultimately coordinate the effort. JPA execution would not be expected to take place prior to the conclusion of the 2009 Regional Acceptance Process.

OTHER COORDINATED EFFORTS

The Water Forum also participates in a number of larger coordinated water management efforts, including; the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint, and the IRWM Roundtable of Regions.

QUESTION 9 – RAP INTERVIEW

Expected Participants

PRIMARY SPOKESPERSON:

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Water/Environmental Resources & Flood Control
Kings River Conservation District

SPOKESPERSON SUPPORT:

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