

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

DAC Pilot Setting

In partnership with the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the Kings Basin Water Authority (KBWA) has undertaken the Kings Basin Disadvantaged Communities Pilot Project Study (KBDAC Study or Study) to develop an inventory of the Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) within the Kings Basin Region (portions of Fresno, Tulare and Kings Counties) and learn how to better integrate and engage the DACs in the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning process.

The objectives of the Study are defined as:

- 1) Develop a comprehensive inventory of all disadvantaged communities and their water-related needs, initiate first-time intentional outreach to all identified DACs, and integrate contact info into the Kings Basin IRWMP mailing lists;
- 2) Engage and integrate DACs effectively into the Kings Basin IRWMP by developing Subregion groups to conduct integrated regional water management planning to address priority DAC needs within the Kings Basin IRWMP; and
- 3) Develop conceptual [pilot] project descriptions and cost estimates to include in the Kings Basin IRWMP master project list and facilitate partnerships between DACs and other IRWMP Members and Interested Parties.

Due to the lower income levels generally found in the San Joaquin Valley, most communities in the Kings Basin Region meet the definition of a DAC. However, there is a significant difference in capacity, water supply and infrastructure needs between an extremely large DAC, such as the City of Fresno, with approximately half a million people and a small severely disadvantaged community (SDAC) with populations of less than a dozen residents, such as a mobile home park or community services district.

**What is a DAC?**

A community with an annual Median Household Income (MHI) that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual MHI is categorized as disadvantaged (DAC); an annual MHI that is less than 60 percent of the statewide MHI is categorized as a severely disadvantaged community (SDAC).

The Kings Basin Region has over 100 DACs. In order to more effectively reach out and engage this

number of DACs, the Kings Basin Region was divided into five Subregions (see **Figure 1-1**): Northern Tulare County, Fresno/Clovis and Surrounding Areas, Western Fresno County, Eastern Fresno County and Northern Kings County with a separated inventory of entities and DACs/SDACs (see left). Entities include special district, schools, mobile home parks, cities, unincorporated communities, assemblage of residences with a community water system. With the statewide annual Median Household Income (MHI) of \$60,392, the DAC annual MHI threshold is \$48,314 and the SDAC annual MHI threshold is \$36,235.

Subregion	Entities	DACs/SDACs
Northern Tulare County	30	15
Fresno/Clovis and Surrounding Areas	78	38
Western Fresno County	44	22
Eastern Fresno County	68	30
Northern Kings County	17	5

DACs have many limiting characteristics beyond income level including: inability to achieve economies of scale;

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low revenues; small or nonexistent reserve funds; dependence on a single source of water; limited pool of informed/educated individuals; lack of equipment; lack of access to technology in an increasingly technological world; limited ability to hire paid staff or consultants; limited understanding of regional or state dialogue concerning water policy; and lack of office space and a secure location for board meetings, records storage and computer equipment. In addition to DACs, many rural schools were found to have similar problems with water infrastructure that were located within or near DACs. These schools were included in the inventory process for the purposes of this Study.

Prior to the KBDAC Study, a general awareness of DACs problems and needs existed, however, through the research and outreach, additional information was collected by asking the following questions:

- 1) What type of issues currently exist with respect to water system, wastewater and/or stormwater and drainage needs?
- 2) Do you currently have any flooding problems?

Following the outreach, the main water-related problems and needs of the DACs were assembled into five main categories; wastewater; drinking water; stormwater; infrastructure; and, Technical, Managerial and Financial (TMF) capacity. The main wastewater issues included septic system failures, permitted flow exceedances, and wastewater effluent violations. The drinking water issues include Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violations of nitrate, arsenic, uranium, dibromochloropropane (DBCP), and other contaminants, and lack of source redundancy for emergency or daily demands. Infrastructure needs included old, poorly maintained systems or inadequate infrastructure.

Additional information was learned through the outreach process including challenges contacting mobile home parks, communities served by private wells and schools with independent water systems. Utilizing existing relationships to identify key community leaders helped reduce the barriers to DAC participation. These barriers included language and technical knowledge constraints. The existing relationships allowed ease of initial contact with community members and the development of new relationships to garner community participation in the KBDAC Study.

### Work Performed

The Study included four tasks, outlined by the grant agreement with DWR. The first task was to identify Subregions, wherein the Kings Basin Region was reviewed and various options for dividing it into smaller, more manageable Subregions were evaluated. Ultimately, five Subregions were selected, based on geographic proximity.

The second task, Data Collection and Outreach, included two major activities: community data collection and DAC outreach. The community data collection activity focused on culling information from existing data sources including DWR, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), United States Census Data, American Community Surveys, and the Tulare Lake Basin DAC Study. The second component, DAC outreach, involved the Project Team members contacting lead representatives from the identified DACs and gain additional information about their communities.

#### **Pilot Project**

A Pilot Project was developed for each Subregion within the Kings Basin Water Authority boundary. Based on public outreach, Pilot Projects were selected, developed and presented to the stakeholders in each Subregion. Each Pilot Project is a preliminary presentation of data and exploration of alternatives associated with an identified problem.

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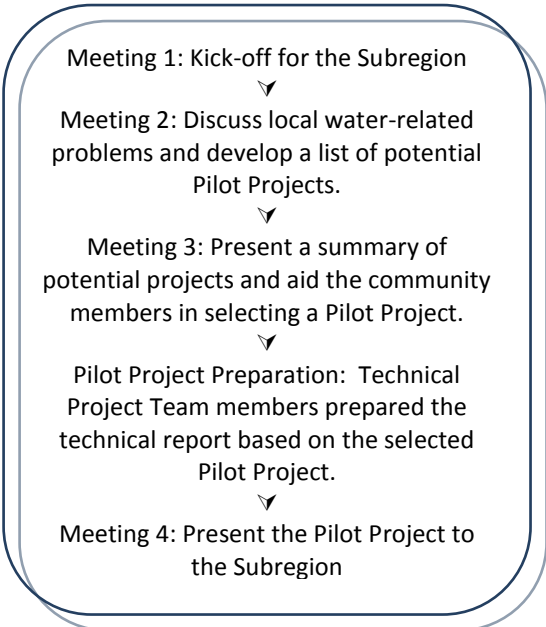
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The third task consisted of community meetings, the preparation of a Pilot Matrix, determination of a Pilot Project, and the preparation of a Pilot Project report for each Subregion. The structure of the community meetings included three progressive meetings that resulted in the preparation and presentation of the Pilot Project Report to the community, as shown in the graphic to the right.

The KBDAC Study resulted in five Pilot Projects Reports, which helped 12 communities and involved more than 40 DACs.

### Outcomes, Results, Benefits and Costs

Once the community meetings and Pilot Project Reports were completed, an evaluation gauging the success of all components of the Study in relationship to the objectives set forth by DWR was performed as outlined in the grant. The Study was evaluated using a data set and several



**DAC Engagement**  
Participants reported that their knowledge of IRWMP planning, funding, and benefits of regional collaboration and trust of neighbors and governments increased as a result of the Study.

feedback tools: participation data; participant surveys; key participant interviews; and, a Project Team debriefing meeting.

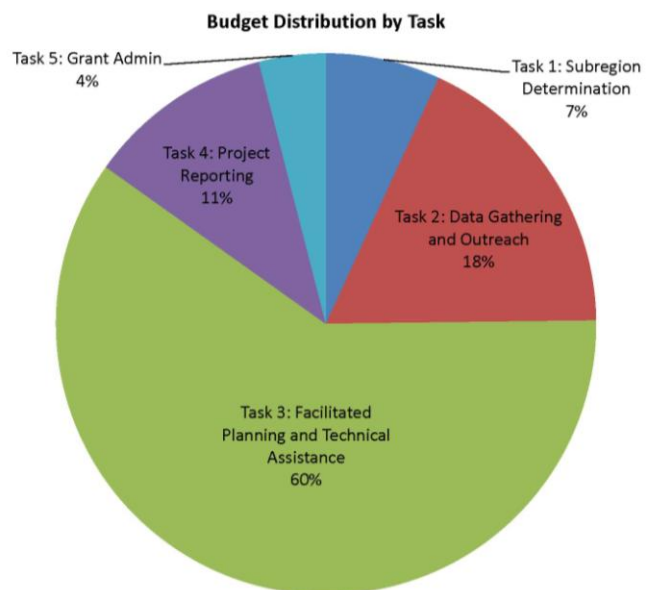
Success in relation to the objectives was evaluated by dividing each objective into several more manageable, associated goals. Each goal was then evaluated based on the four premises. Through the evaluation process it was determined the KBDAC Study engaged over 110 participants and 31 communities with the Northern Tulare

County Subregion having the most overall participation and the Western Fresno Subregion having the most consistent participation.

### Sustainability

The momentum induced by the KBDAC Study is unparalleled in the Kings Basin Region and DWR specifically asked that this Study investigate how to sustain the momentum and the Pilot Project progress in the communities. To help ensure success in sustaining the Study goals, adjusting the outreach method to match characteristics of the DACs will be helpful.

The second component of sustainability is funding based. The Study had a budget of \$500,000, of which 60 percent was committed to Task 3 (Facilitated Planning and Technical Assistance). The remainder of the budget was divided amongst Tasks 1, 2, 4 and 5 (see right). Future studies can learn from the budget expended on this Study; Task 3, with the largest



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single portion of the budget, was critical in meeting the intent of the Study.

IRWMP Funding is only one component of a larger funding picture/opportunity. This Study was undertaken specifically to look at DACs and the relationship with the IRWMP. Additional funding sources are California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SDWSRF), CDPH Proposition 84, State Water Resources Control Board Clean Water SRF, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

#### Conclusions, Next Steps and Recommendations

Upon completion of the Study, several major successes of the Study should be noted:

- 1) A comprehensive inventory of DACs within the Kings Basin has been prepared and included in this report;
- 2) At least two new DACs are planning to join the KBWA as Interested Parties;
- 3) Communication between Northern Tulare County entities significantly improved – prior to the Study the relationship between DACs in the Subregion was reactive; by the end of the community meetings, seven entities committed to working together and exploring sharing services;
- 4) A survey conducted as one of the Pilot Projects provided concrete information for the community of Easton regarding a community water system. The results of the community survey that was performed will enable the community to move forward in an educated manner to solve their drinking water problems;
- 5) Inter-community altruism in the Western Fresno County Subregion was facilitated. Despite several communities having severe water-related problems to be solved, the communities unanimously agreed to promote finding a solution for Lanare Community Service District's (CSD) wastewater issues. This showed these communities truly understood the spirit of collaboration; finding a solution to the highest priority issue, even if that solution does not directly benefit each individual community;
- 6) Provided assistance to Orange Cove to allow the community to further explore options to solve their water supply issue, which can be critical depending on the maintenance schedule of the Friant-Kern Canal; and
- 7) Encouraged and enabled Armona CSD to join the IRWMP as an Interested Party, pending KBWA initiating the process of altering the IRWMP boundary.

Several "Next Steps" were developed from observations witnessed during the KBDAC Study efforts, from specific comments or from questions discussed during the development of the Pilot Projects. These "Next Steps" have been identified to carry the objectives of this Study forward.

- 1) Compile and Store KBDAC Study Data in one accessible location;
- 2) Distribute the Final Report and make it available on the KBWA website;
- 3) Include DAC contacts in KBWA mailing list for future meeting announcements, funding information, and other information; and,
- 4) Next Steps for DACs specifically:

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- a) Continue to educate themselves on the IRWMP process and stay engaged;
- b) Attend IRWMP meetings;
- c) Become an Interested Party or Member of the KBWA; and,
- d) Consider pursuing projects identified in the Pilot Matrices for each Subregion.

In order to satisfy the grant, the Study was also tasked with “recommend[ing] how other regional groups may be successful at approaching and engaging DACs in the IRWMP process”, a series of higher level recommendations have been prepared for the KBWA and DWR to consider implementing, as appropriate. Some of these recommendations include staffing a Regional DAC Coordinator; using NGOs or CBOs for outreach and DAC contacts; providing technical and/or financial support for DACs to prepare funding applications; considering DAC characteristics when reviewing funding applications; including an inventory of private well communities in the scoping of future DAC studies; as deemed beneficial utilizing non-email forms of communication to DACs; and, conducting pre-application and grant application workshops or trainings.