

# Kaweah Subbasin Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program

## Request for Proposals

*Document Publication Date: September 29, 2023*

### Summary

This is a Request for Proposals (RFP) and [Project Application](#) for the Kaweah Subbasin Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP). Projects submitted through this program should address sustainable management of groundwater supplies, provide drought and flood relief, restore wildlife habitat, support the Kaweah Subbasin's land-based and agricultural economy, and/or provide other direct benefits to disadvantaged communities and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs).

*Si necesita ayuda o información en español, por favor comuníquese con Sonia Sanchez al (559) 802-1689 o [SoniaS@selfhelpenterprises.org](mailto:SoniaS@selfhelpenterprises.org).*

### MLRP Background

The Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District and regional partners received a \$10 million block grant to support land repurposing in the Kaweah Subbasin from the California Department of Conservation's MLRP Program. This Program aims to reduce reliance on groundwater while providing community health, economic well-being, water supply, habitat, renewable energy, and climate benefits.

The MLRP program is designed to support California communities that are navigating changes driven by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which sets a deadline to transition to sustainable groundwater use by 2040 in this region. Experts estimate 500,000 to 1,000,000 acres of farmland in the San Joaquin Valley alone may need to be fallowed, retired, or repurposed to balance groundwater supplies and address climate change-driven water scarcity. If left unmanaged, fallowed or retired fields can emit dust and worsen air quality; host weeds and pests; and adversely impact agricultural economies, rural communities, and ecosystems.<sup>1</sup> As a beneficial alternative, the MLRP aims to reduce these potential negative impacts and invest in solutions that provide benefits to both the environment and surrounding communities.

### Geographic Boundary

Kaweah MLRP projects must be located in the Kaweah Subbasin to be eligible for funding. The subbasin is made up of the Greater Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Mid-Kaweah GSA, and East Kaweah GSA. The Kaweah Subbasin is mainly situated in Tulare County, including the cities of Visalia, Tulare, Lindsay, Farmersville, Exeter, and Woodlake as well as the communities of Plainview,

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<sup>1</sup> Hanak, Ellen & Escrivá-Bou, Alvar & Gray, Brian & Green, Sarge & Harter, Thomas & Jezdimirovic, Jelena & Lund, Jay & Azuara, Josué & Moyle, Peter & Seavy, Nathaniel. (2019). Water and the Future of the San Joaquin Valley. 10.13140/RG.2.2.24360.83208.

Tooleville, Lemon Cove, West Goshen, Okieville and Waukena. It also includes a small adjacent portion of Kings County.

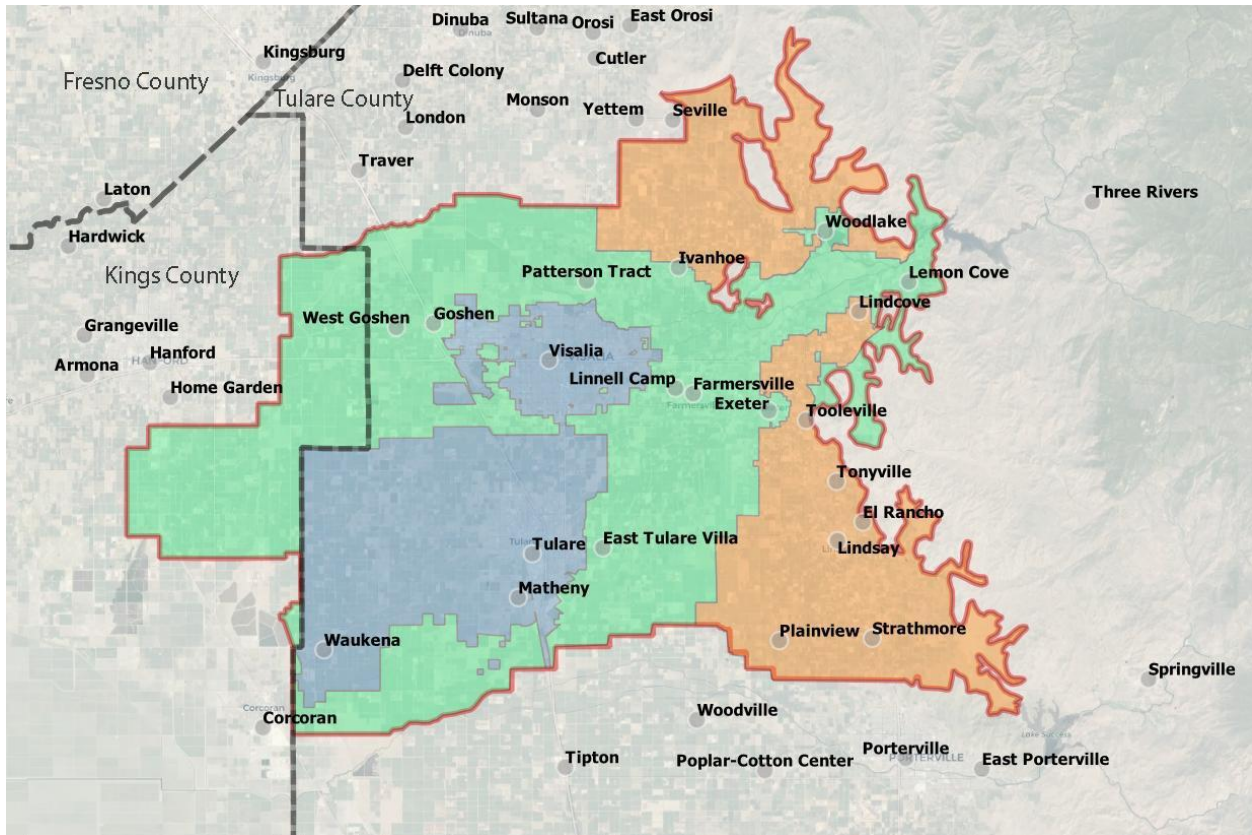


Figure 1. Kaweah Subbasin Map

## Funding Availability

Through this solicitation, the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District (KDWCD) will award up to a total of **\$7.5 million** to land repurposing projects in the Kaweah Subbasin that are submitted during the solicitation period from **September 29 to November 17, 2023**. Projects should align with one of the following categories:

- **Project Implementation (up to \$5.5 million)** - Project Implementation applications will be received for on-the-ground land repurposing projects that will be completed prior to **February 28, 2026**. These projects are eligible for up to \$1.5 million per project and should plan to have project design and permitting completed by December 31, 2024. A maximum of \$5.5 million will be available for Project Implementation applications.
- **Project Development (up to \$2 million)** - Project Development applications will be accepted for projects that are in earlier phases of development and are unlikely to be implemented prior to February 28, 2026, but can achieve “shovel-ready” status by that date through MLRP funding. These funds would be allocated for the finalization of project designs, plans, and permits that

would result in a fully-planned and permitted project by the end of the grant period, which could be later fundable and implementable through additional funding sources. These projects will be eligible to receive up to \$300,000 per project. A maximum of \$2 million will be available for Project Development applications.

- **Capacity Building** - Capacity Building Funds may be made available for applicants who need support to further develop projects that are not formalized enough for Project Development funds. These funds are designated to assist applicants in collaborating with regional stakeholders to further develop project ideas, identify potential project sites, and develop early-stage project designs. Thus, regional applicants are encouraged to apply with projects in all developmental stages. Capacity funding requests should be between \$10,000 and \$50,000 per project.

## Application Deadline

Applications must be submitted by **11:59 pm on November 17, 2023**. Please submit complete applications to [support@valley.eco](mailto:support@valley.eco). Extensions may be granted under special circumstances; please reach out to [support@valley.eco](mailto:support@valley.eco) if your project requires a submission extension.

## Project Eligibility

Projects developed through the MLRP program aim to reduce groundwater use, improve water quality, restore habitat, improve access to nature, and increase regional workforces or diversify economic opportunities, particularly in disadvantaged communities and farmworker communities. Eligible projects must provide a public benefit for at least ten years; some examples of strategies and project types that may be funded by the program include, but **are not limited to**:

- Creation or restoration of habitat such as pollinator habitat, wetland habitat, upland habitat and riparian habitat, and/or restoration of floodplains.
- Development of multibenefit groundwater recharge areas.
- Transition of irrigated land to dryland farming or non-irrigated rangeland.
- Transition to less water intensive crops, including native seed production.
- Planting of cover crops or conservation cover.
- Reestablishment of Tribal land uses, and implementation of Tribal cultural practices.
- Facilitation of renewable energy projects that have an overall net greenhouse gas reduction.
- Creation of parks or community recreation areas.
- Land acquisitions to facilitate land repurposing and protect repurposed land uses.
- Voluntary land transfers to tribes or qualified public entities to facilitate land repurposing and protect repurposed land uses.
- Other projects that meet the conservation and community-based objectives of the MLRP Program (please contact [support@valley.eco](mailto:support@valley.eco)).

**Eligible Applicants:** Public agencies; nonprofit groups with 501(c)3 status; California Native American tribes or bands that are either federally recognized, or tribes or bands on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission; Landowners; Groundwater Sustainability Agencies; and Watermasters implementing an approved groundwater sustainability plan or approved alternative to a groundwater sustainability plan. Applicants should be locally-based or illustrate strong local partnerships.

## **Project Prioritization**

Project selections will be made based on a weighted criteria,\* which are summarized below and incorporate priorities identified in the CA Department of Conservation's MLRP [Project Implementation Approval Packet](#) at <https://tinyurl.com/mlrpguidelines>. To be considered for funding, projects must address at least one Core Criteria Category. Additional details on project selection criteria can be found starting on page 5 of the [Project Application](#).

***Kaweah Water Quality and Supply (Core Criteria Category)*** - The MLRP program will prioritize projects that improve groundwater supply, quality, and resilience and/or improve floodplain management and storage.

***Disadvantaged Community Benefits (Core Criteria Category)*** - The program will prioritize projects that provide drinking water supply and security benefits for disadvantaged communities, improve economic and workforce benefits, and/or provide other benefits to disadvantaged communities (i.e. green space, recreation opportunities, improved air quality, educational opportunities, etc.).

***Agricultural and Economic Resiliency (Core Criteria Category)*** - The program will prioritize projects that provide direct financial assistance to impacted landowners, improve the sustainability of local agricultural economies, and/or diversify economic opportunities for the region.

***Regional Ecological Benefits (Core Criteria Category)*** - The program will prioritize projects that improve ecological outcomes through increased habitat connectivity, direct benefits to state and federal species of interest, increased resiliency of groundwater-dependent ecosystems, and/or other ecological benefits to the Kaweah Subbasin.

***Geographic Prioritization*** - The program will prioritize projects that are proximal to disadvantaged communities or their critical water infrastructure, ecological areas, and existing or developing water conservation projects and facilities. Additionally, projects will be prioritized that are situated in areas with severe subsidence and/or severe water depletion.

***Regional Coordination*** - Projects will receive additional priority by showing alignment with local Groundwater Sustainability Plans and other regional planning and conservation efforts, displaying local partner and community support, and/or incorporating participation from diverse local partners.

***Scalability and Feasibility*** - Projects must indicate implementation-readiness, be feasible to implement, have a feasible impact, and the ability to scale and replicate the project design.

***Additional Criteria and Considerations*** - Projects that provide an in-kind cost share or include match contributions may be granted additional consideration. Alternatively, projects that exhibit a critical financial need for execution of the project may also be granted additional consideration.

*\*KDWCD reserves the right to withhold funding offered in this solicitation if proposed projects do not sufficiently meet the Selection Criteria, if projects fail to fully address the requirements of the Department of Conservation, or if the project maintenance represents an undue burden on KDWCD or GSAs.*

# Kaweah MLRP Application - 2023

## Application Checklist

Submitted Application Package must include all of the following items.

- Completed Kaweah MLRP Application
- Map of Project Site (if applicable)
- Work Plan
- Project Budget
- Letters of Support or Letters of Commitment (as applicable)

*For assistance with this application, please contact [support@valley.eco](mailto:support@valley.eco), or call (209) 202-3536.*

*Si necesita ayuda o una copia de esta solicitud en español, por favor comuníquese con Sonia Sanchez al (559) 802-1689 o [SoniaS@selfhelpenterprises.org](mailto:SoniaS@selfhelpenterprises.org)*

# Project Overview

Project name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization or applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization type: \_\_\_\_\_

Project partners (list all): \_\_\_\_\_

Primary applicant's name and title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Landowner (if not the primary applicant): \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated start date: \_\_\_\_\_ End date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Executive Summary**

*Please provide a short one-paragraph summary of the proposed project below. Additional space to describe the project is provided throughout the application document.*

## Project Type

*Please select the project type(s) below that best describe(s) the nature of your project. Select all that apply.*

- Creation or restoration of habitat such as pollinator habitat, wetland habitat, upland habitat and riparian habitat, and/or restoration of floodplains.
- Development of multibenefit groundwater recharge areas (i.e. community-based recharge, wildlife-friendly recharge, etc.).
- Transition of irrigated land to dryland farming or non-irrigated rangeland.
- Transition to less water intensive crops, including native seed production.
- Planting of cover crops or conservation cover.
- Re-establishment of Tribal land uses, and implementation of Tribal cultural practices.
- Facilitation of renewable energy projects that have an overall net greenhouse gas reduction.
- Creation of parks or community recreation areas.
- Land acquisitions to facilitate land repurposing and protect repurposed land uses.
- Voluntary land transfers to tribes or qualified public entities to facilitate land repurposing and protect repurposed land uses.
- Other. Please describe below:

## Project Longevity

*Please note the anticipated period of benefit provided by your project (eligible projects must provide at least 10 years of benefit beyond project implementation). Select one of the following:*

- This project will provide resource benefits for \_\_\_\_\_ years following project implementation.
- Project will provide benefits in perpetuity.



## Funding Summary

Total estimated project cost: \_\_\_\_\_

MLRP funding requested: \_\_\_\_\_ Match (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

### Type of MLRP Funding Requested:

*Please select one.*

Project Implementation

Project Development

Capacity Building

### Project Description:

*Please describe the proposed project below (2 pages maximum).*

# Project Selection Criteria

Project selections will be made based on the weighted criteria listed below, which incorporate priorities identified in the CA Department of Conservation's MLRP [Project Implementation Approval Packet](https://tinyurl.com/mlrpguidelines) at <https://tinyurl.com/mlrpguidelines>. For each of the following sections, please select all elements that apply to your project and explain how your project will fulfill the selected criteria in a short explanation at the bottom of each page.

**To be considered for funding, projects must address at least one element in at least one of the Core Criteria Categories listed below. Projects that address multiple Core Criteria Categories will score higher than projects that address only one.**

## **Core Criteria Categories**

- Kaweah Water Quality and Supply (30 Points)
- Disadvantaged Community Benefits (25 Points)
- Agricultural and Economic Resiliency (25 Points)
- Regional Ecological Benefits (25 Points)

## **Additional Criteria**

- Geographic Prioritization (25 Points)
- Regional Coordination (10 Points)
- Scalability and Feasibility (20 Points)
- Additional Criteria and Considerations (5 Points)

## **Kaweah Water Quality and Supply (30 Points)**

*The MLRP program will prioritize projects that improve water supply quantity, flexibility, quality, and resiliency and/or improve floodplain management and storage. Select all that apply. Projects may receive full points if they thoroughly address a single criterion, or multiple criteria within this section.*

### **Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):**

***Improved Water Supply Quantity, Flexibility, and Resiliency:***

Improvement of quantity of water in ecosystem, greater flexibility in options for water usage including reduced-usage approaches, reduction of groundwater use, and improvement of groundwater supply.

***Water Quality Benefits:*** Provides improvement in water quality that can be measured and demonstrated.

***Floodplain Management and Storage (including Groundwater) Benefits:***   
Provides management strategies and mechanisms for floodplain management, increases groundwater recharge.

***"Measurability/Observability" of Benefits:*** Provides water benefits which can be measured or noted consistently, and are able to be maintained for a minimum of 10 years beyond project implementation (CA Department of Conservation implementation requirement).

### **Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (1/2 page maximum):**

**Will the landowner forfeit any water allocation under the scope of the project proposed?**

Yes

No

*If yes, please describe the nature of the water supply forfeiture below:*

**Does your project have a groundwater recharge component included?**

Yes

No

*If yes, describe the mechanism and infrastructure available or needed for transporting water to the property and the applicable water rights/agreements as appropriate:*

**Is your project located on a solely groundwater-dependant property?**

Yes

No - there is access to surface water on the property.

*Please describe further if necessary:*

## Disadvantaged Community Benefits (25 Points)

The program will prioritize projects that provide drinking water supply and security benefits for disadvantaged communities, improve economic and workforce benefits, and/or provide other benefits to disadvantaged communities (i.e. green space, recreation opportunities, improved air quality, educational opportunities, etc.). Select all that apply. Projects may receive full points if they thoroughly address a single criterion, or multiple criteria within this section.

### Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):

- Drinking Water Supply and Security Benefits and/or Water Quality Benefits for Disadvantaged Communities:** Improved access to safe drinking water; improved water security for disadvantaged communities; improved quality of water at recreational or public access sites in disadvantaged communities.
- Economic and Workforce Benefits:** Increased economic and workforce opportunities for members of disadvantaged communities, or opportunities that serve disadvantaged communities by improving access to resources and/or services.
- Other Disadvantaged Community Benefits:** Increased community benefits such as: increased green spaces and/or recreational areas, improved air quality, improved soil quality, reduced pesticide load or frequency of use, and educational opportunities.
- Tribal Use/Benefit:** Reestablishes tribal resource use that incorporates reduction of water use, provides resource availability or security, or provides another benefit to a tribe or band (applicant must be a tribe or band or demonstrate a substantive partnership with a tribe to select this criterion).

**Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (1/2 page maximum):**

## **Agricultural and Economic Resiliency (25 Points)**

*The program will prioritize projects that provide direct financial assistance to impacted landowners, improve the sustainability of local agricultural economies, and/or diversify economic opportunities for the region. Select all that apply. Projects may receive full points if they thoroughly address a single criterion, or multiple criteria within this section.*

### **Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):**

***Provides Financial Assistance to Impacted Landowners:*** Financial compensation provided, when available, to landowners repurposing land to achieve GSP goals with an emphasis on providing assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.

***Sustains Agricultural Economies:*** Supports agricultural economies by targeting the least productive farmland for land repurposing, or provides other economic benefits including increased pay, benefits, job security, and/or working conditions for farmworkers.

***Diversifies Economic Opportunities:*** Diversifies agricultural economic opportunities by shifting crop types, building approaches based on drought-resilient growing methods, or providing agricultural workforce benefits.

### **Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (1/2 page maximum):**

## Regional Ecological Benefits (25 Points)

The program will prioritize projects that improve ecological outcomes through increased habitat connectivity, direct benefits to state and federal species of interest, increased resiliency of groundwater-dependent ecosystems, and/or other ecological benefits to the Kaweah Subbasin. Select all that apply. Projects may receive full points if they thoroughly address a single criterion, or multiple criteria within this section.

### Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):

**Habitat Connectivity:** Increased possibility for connectivity of habitat sites that enable wildlife to move across the landscape.

**Species of Interest:** Restoration or conservation of habitat suitable for wildlife such as endangered species/federally listed species, species of special concern, or other keystone species in the ecosystem on-site.

**Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem Benefits:** Ecosystem benefits such as soil health, support of native vegetation, support of species diversity, and other benefits that are supported by increased groundwater availability.

**Other Ecological Benefits:** Other benefits not quantified above, including but not limited to: increasing soil stability, soil desalination, increasing or providing native animal species overwintering/breeding/forage sites.

**Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (½ page maximum):**

## Geographic Prioritization (25 Points)

*The program will prioritize projects that are proximal to disadvantaged communities or their critical water infrastructure, ecological areas, and existing or developing water conservation projects and facilities. Additionally, projects will be prioritized that are situated in areas with severe subsidence and/or severe water depletion. Select all that apply. Projects may receive full points if they thoroughly address a single criterion, or multiple criteria within this section.*

### Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):

***Proximity to Disadvantaged Communities:*** Proximity of project to disadvantaged communities that stand to benefit from the project, and/or their critical water infrastructure such as well fields (See [Appendix 1](#) or Visit <https://tinyurl.com/kaweahmap>).

***Proximity to Ecological Areas:*** Proximity of project to high-quality habitat (including seasonal wetland and vernal pool areas).

***Connectivity to Existing or Prospective Projects and Relevant Facilities:*** Provides connectivity to existing or prospective projects or facilities that provide a connectivity benefit for infrastructure such as water conservation, recharge, storage, etc.

***Alignment with Projected Overdraft Regions, or Low Sustainability/Low Productivity lands:*** Proximity of project to projected groundwater overdraft regions and/or location of project in a solely groundwater-dependant region.

### Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (1/2 page maximum):



### **Regional Coordination (10 Points)**

*Projects will receive additional priority by showing alignment with local Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) and other regional planning and conservation efforts, displaying local partner and community support, and/or incorporating participation from diverse local partners.*

**Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):**

***Alignment with GSPs/Regional Plans/Ongoing Efforts:*** Project aligns with regional and basin-scale efforts to achieve groundwater sustainability, address drought and flood emergencies, and/or other climate change-related issues, including reducing hazards to affected communities.

***Partner and Community Support and Coordination with local stakeholders:*** Project is supported by a range of regional partners representing diverse interests and/or incorporates participation from diverse local partners.

**Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (½ page maximum):**

## Scalability and Feasibility (20 Points)

*Projects must indicate implementation-readiness, be feasible to implement, have a feasible impact, and the ability to scale and replicate the project design.*

### Criteria addressed by the project (select all that apply):

***Project Readiness:*** Project can be implemented in the near term (approximately 3 years).

***Feasibility of Implementation:*** Project can be feasibility implemented with available resources and given external constraints.

***Feasibility of Effect:*** Anticipated project benefits can feasibly be achieved based on thorough delivery of project as designed.

***Opportunity for Scaling and Replication:*** Project is scalable and represents a potentially transferable model that could be replicated.

***Applicant and Partner(s) Fiscal and Administrative Capacity:*** Project partners demonstrate fiscal and administrative capacity to complete project activities and oversee the project through to completion.

**Describe how the project addresses the selected Criteria (½ page maximum):**

### **Additional Criteria and Considerations (5 Points)**

*Projects that provide an in-kind cost share or include match contributions may be granted additional consideration. Alternatively, projects that exhibit a critical financial need for execution of the project may also be granted additional consideration. Additional consideration may also be given to small or disadvantaged growers or other distinguishing factors not listed above.*

**Describe any match contributions, critical financial needs, or benefits provided to small and/or disadvantaged growers that should be considered. Additionally, please describe any additional project benefit(s) not captured elsewhere in this application (½ page maximum):**

# Additional Project Information

## Technical Assistance and Project Support

*It is anticipated that some projects may need technical assistance to proceed through project development and/or implementation. Depending on the nature of the project, technical assistance may be available through the MLRP program and its partners. Resources may be available to support projects via: Planning and Design, Writing, Project Management and Administration, Reporting, and Habitat Restoration.*

**Does your project require technical assistance?**

- Yes
- No

*If your project will require technical assistance or support, please describe the need below:*

## Environmental Review- CEQA Status

Some projects may be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Please select a box below that best reflects your project, and provide a short description in the space provided.

### The proposed project:

- Is not a project under CEQA. Briefly specify why in the space below.
- Is exempt under CEQA. Provide the CEQA exemption number and specify how the project meets the terms of the exemption in the space below.
- Requires Neg Dec, MND, or EIR. Specify the lead CEQA agency (the agency preparing the document) and the (expected) completion date in the box below.
- Unsure if this project requires CEQA compliance. Please contact [support@valley.eco](mailto:support@valley.eco) for assistance.

### Description of CEQA Status:

## Work Plan

Please provide a detailed work plan organized by Task. This plan should include all work to be completed by the applicant and any deliverables associated with that task. Please add additional Tasks as needed below. If selected, applicants may be asked to provide a more detailed Work Plan.

**Task 1:** [Enter Task Name]

**Description:**

**Deliverable(s):** [Enter Text Here]

**Anticipated Completion Date:** [Enter Text Here]

**Task 2:** [Enter Task Name]

**Description:**

**Deliverable(s):** [Enter Text Here]

**Anticipated Completion Date:** [Enter Text Here]

**Task 3:** [Enter Task Name]

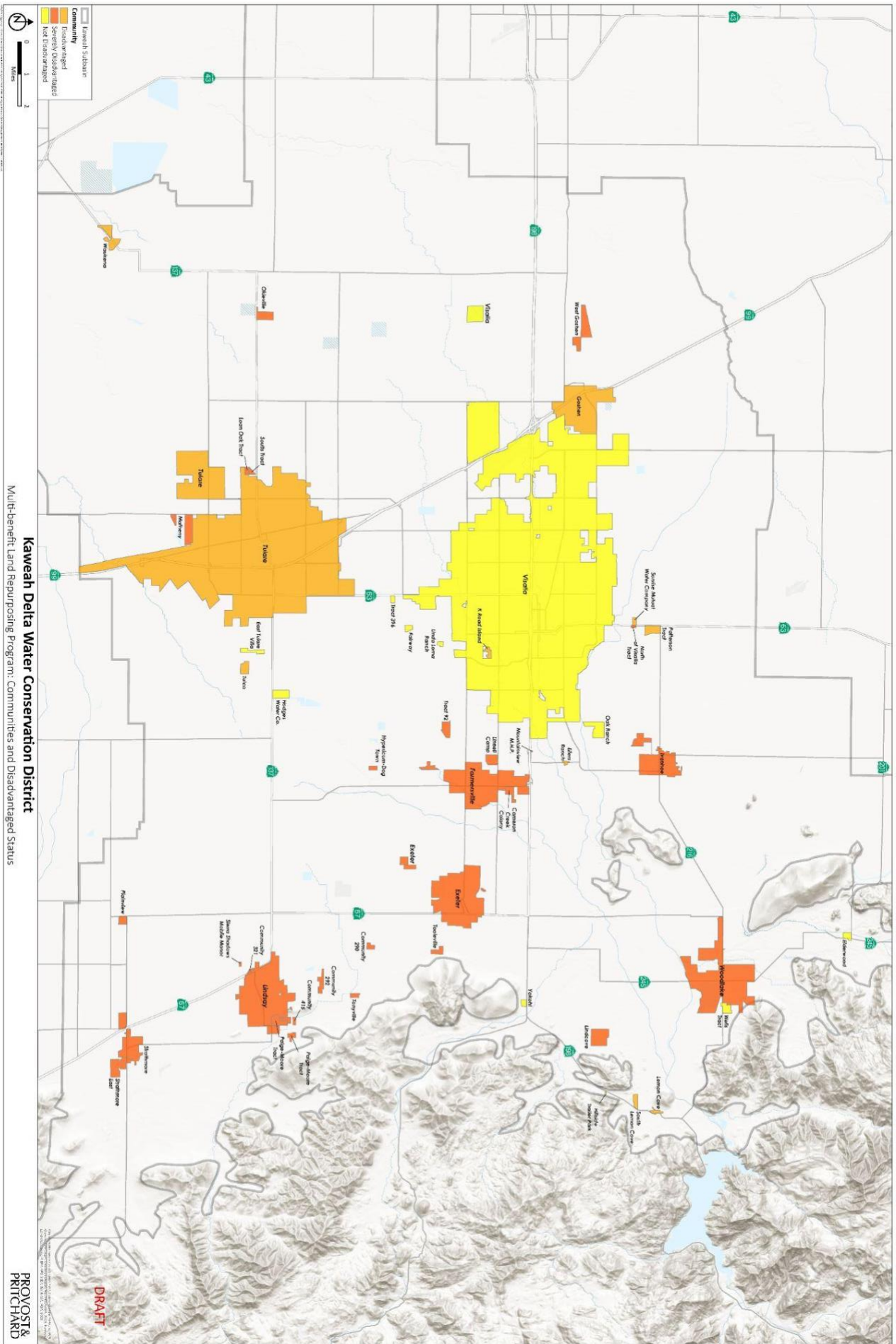
**Description:**

**Deliverable(s):** [Enter Text Here]

**Anticipated Completion Date:** [Enter Text Here]

## **Project Budget**

Please attach a task-based project budget with your submission that allocates project costs by the Tasks listed in the Work Plan described in the previous section.



Appendix 1 - Kaweah Subbasin Disadvantaged Community Map; <https://tinyurl.com/kaweahmap>