

# Kaweah Subbasin Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) Notice

*Upcoming Request for Proposals Release: September 29, 2023*

## Summary

On September 29, 2023, the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District will be releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Kaweah Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP), and will begin accepting applications for projects within the Kaweah Subbasin. This Notice is intended to inform regional stakeholders and potential applicants of the upcoming opportunity, and to get feedback on the process prior to the formal RFP and application period. Projects submitted through this program may target sustainable management of groundwater supplies, provide drought and flood relief, restore wildlife habitat, and/or provide other direct benefits to disadvantaged communities and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs), while also protecting the Kaweah Subbasin's land-based and agricultural economy.

*Si necesita ayuda o información en español, por favor consulte [este enlace](#) o 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, which 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 2040/2042 target for transition to sustainable groundwater use. 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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Hanak, Ellen & Escriva-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.

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

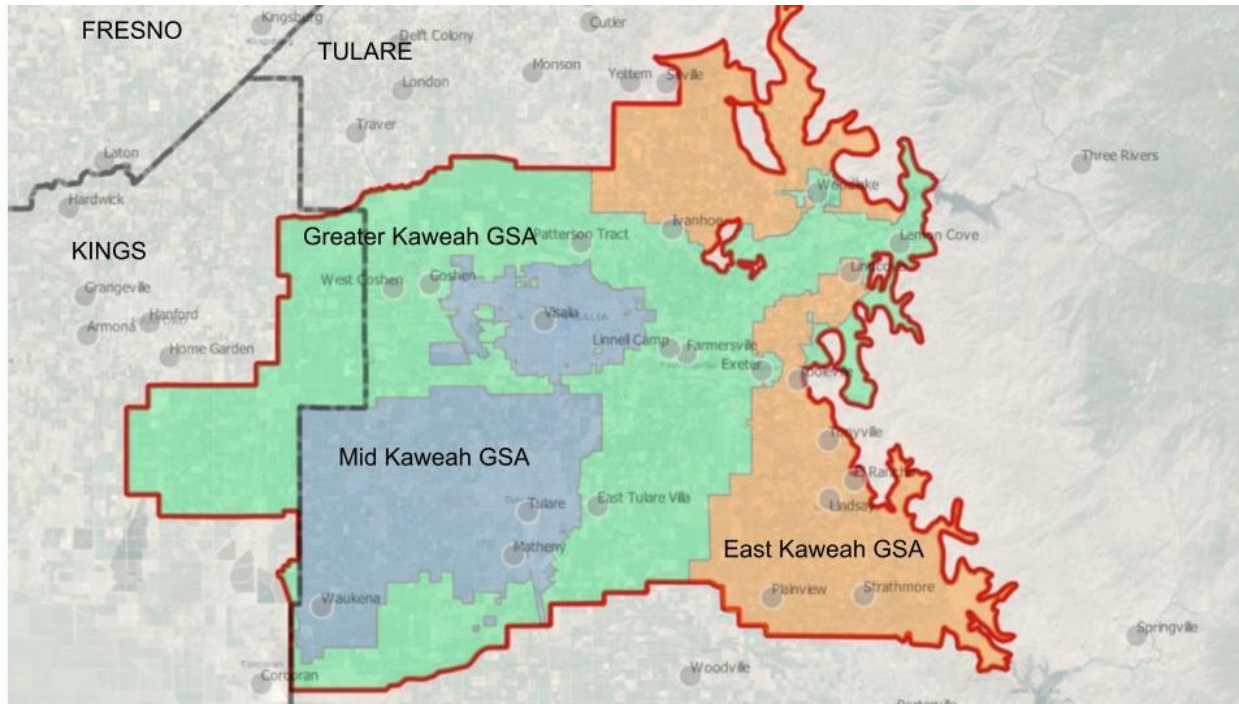


Figure 1. Kaweah Subbasin Map

## Funding Availability

The Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District will award up to a total **\$7.5 million** to land repurposing projects in the Kaweah Subbasin that are submitted during the upcoming solicitation period from **September 29 to November 3, 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 30, 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 30, 2026, but can achieve “shovel-ready” status by that date through MLRP funding. These funds should be allocated to the finalization of project designs, plans, and permits. 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 funds may be made available for applicants who need support to further development project plans that are reflective of the MLRP programmatic objectives. Thus, regional applicants are encouraged to apply with projects in all developmental stages.

## Key Dates

The following are key dates for the Kaweah MLRP Program RFP and Application Period; these dates are subject to change upon release of the formal RFP.

<b>September 29, 2023</b>	Application Period beginning with the official release of the Request for Proposals (includes application templates and project selection criteria).
<b>November 3, 2023</b>	Proposal Submission Deadline and closing of the Application Period.
<b>December 1, 2023</b>	Project selections submitted to California Department of Conservation for funding approval and finalization.

## 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).

**Eligible Applicants:** Public agencies; nonprofit groups with 501(c)3 status; California Native American tribes that are either federally recognized or tribes 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 will be released with the formal Request for Proposals on September 29, 2023. The following is a list of preliminary project selection criteria that will be used to evaluate projects, 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>.

*Please note that these criteria are preliminary and are subject to change upon review and input from Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, GSA Managers, and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.*

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

***Agricultural and Economic Resiliency (Core Criteria)*** - 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.

***Disadvantaged Community Benefits (Core Criteria)*** - 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.).

***Regional Ecological Benefits (Core Criteria)*** - 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.

**Match and Critical Financial Need** - 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.

## Join the Stakeholder Advisory Committee!

The Kaweah MLRP program is seeking the input of local community members, small farmers and ranchers, and interested stakeholders to participate in a Stakeholder Advisory Committee. This committee will be asked to review the MLRP Project Selection Criteria as well as the selected projects prior to submission to the Department of Conservation. Following this application period, this Committee will also be updated about ongoing Kaweah MLRP projects and planning efforts. The estimated time commitment for participation in this Committee is 8 hours total in September and November 2023, and 4 hours per quarter for the remainder of the grant period. Stipends and other resources can be made available to support stakeholder participation.

Stakeholders interested in learning more about the program or getting involved in land repurposing projects should reach out to: [info@sequoiariverlands.org](mailto:info@sequoiariverlands.org), or call Sequoia Riverlands Trust at (559) 738-0211.

*This Notice is intended to inform regional stakeholders of the upcoming Request for Proposals to be released September 29, 2023. All program elements may be subject to change in the final Request for Proposals. The Notice was last updated on August 29, 2023.*