

Application for 2022 WaterSMART Cooperative  
Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant

FORMATION OF THE TULE BASIN WATERSHED COALITION



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**Tule Basin**  
LAND & WATER CONSERVATION TRUST

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## I. TECHNICAL PROPOSAL AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

### A. Executive Summary

Application Date: March 30, 2022

Applicant name: Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation Trust

Location: Visalia, Tulare County, California

Project Name: Tule Subbasin Watershed Coalition

*Proposal Summary:* The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation Trust (Trust) in collaboration with other stakeholders, will formally establish the *Tule Basin Watershed Coalition* (Coalition). The Trust proposes to use the funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant to:

1. Build upon ongoing watershed coordination efforts by expanding the existing Watershed Steering Committee and formally establishing the *Tule Subbasin Watershed Coalition*. Establishment of the Coalition will include development of Coalition mission and goals, collaboration with key regional partners, and clarification of Coalition roles and workflows.
2. Engage a diverse set of stakeholders regarding water quality and quantity issues within the watershed through targeted outreach.
3. Evaluate how climate change will alter current watershed conditions and affect water management practices in the Basin, focusing on the impacts to disadvantaged communities.

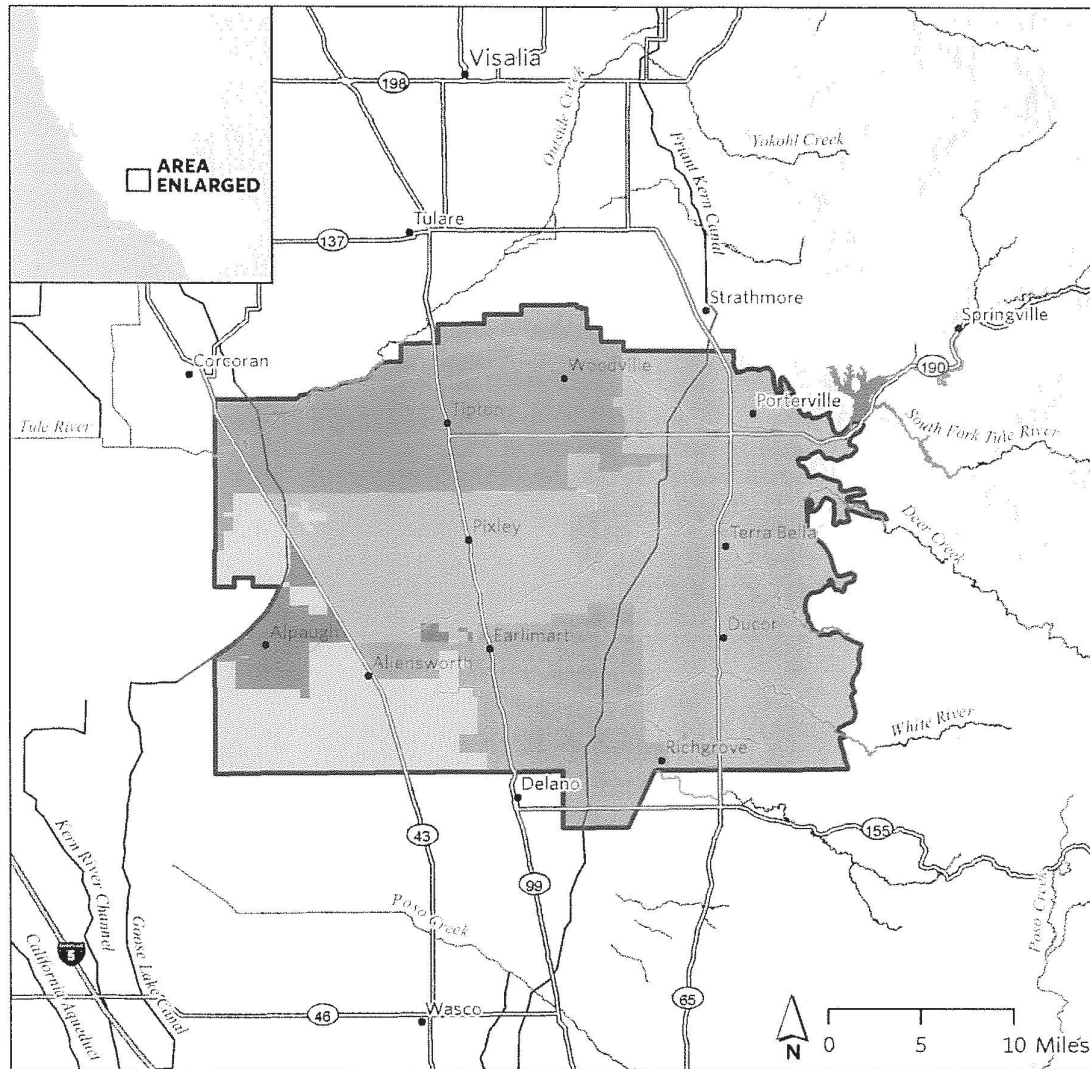
The Tule watershed and subbasin (project area), has experienced significant groundwater level declines over the past several decades, which affects water reliability, quality, and land subsidence, severely impacting underserved communities, wildlife-dependent ecosystems, and irrigated agriculture. The Coalition, once fully developed, will extend the Watershed Steering Committee's current efforts with staffing and structure with the intent to further the Committee's progress and serve as a model of community interests coming together to secure and protect sustainable water resources in the Central Valley in California.

*Time period:* The establishment of the Coalition is expected to take nine months and be completed by the end of 2023, assuming a funding contract is awarded by the end of 2022. The balance of the scope workload will be completed by the end of 2024.

*Federal facility:* The proposed Coalition project area includes federal lands of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Central Valley Project–Friant Division (CVP)—a federal irrigation project. Water users in the Coalition project area contract for 30% of the total water supplied by the Central Valley Project–Friant Division (CVP). Groundwater beneath the proposed project area is affected by CVP infrastructure and operations.

Figure 1 - Project Location

## Map 1: Project Location



- Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
- Alpaugh GSA
  - County of Tulare GSA
  - Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District GSA
  - Eastern Tule GSA
  - Lower Tule River Irrigation District GSA
  - Pixley Irrigation District GSA
  - Tri-County Water Authority GSA

- San Joaquin Valley - Tule Subbasin
- Aqueduct/Canal

Data Sources: Basins and GSAs - DWR,  
Roads - Caltrans, Rivers - NHD, Basemap - Esri

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## B. Project Location

The location of the project area (see Figure 1) is the Tule River subbasin watershed as defined by *California's Groundwater* (Bulletin 118) watershed boundaries and includes the southern portion of Tulare County in the Central Valley of California.<sup>1</sup> The Tule River watershed is denoted as USGS HUC 18030005 and 18030005. The largest city in the watershed is Porterville, with a population of 60,000 people. The project area also includes 15 smaller rural communities that are designated by California under State law as disadvantaged, meaning a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income.

The Tule Subbasin is a critically overdrafted groundwater basin, designated as high priority by the State of California. The Subbasin is comprised of agricultural lands (dairies, nuts, vineyards, cotton, etc.), numerous disadvantaged communities, and public wetland and upland habitat complexes including the Pixley National Wildlife Refuge, NRCS' Wetland Reserve Program easements, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) lands, and Allensworth State Park, among others.

## C. Technical Project Description

### 1. Applicant Category and Eligibility

#### *Applicant Category*

Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation Trust (Trust) is seeking funding as an Existing Watershed Group. The Trust is choosing to apply as an Existing Watershed Group based on an already established footprint of watershed coordination in the Tule Subbasin. In the fall of 2020, the Trust collaborated on a proposal through the California Department of Conservation (DOC) under the 2020 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Watershed Coordinator Program Grant to fund a part-time Watershed Coordinator for the Tule Subbasin. That grant was awarded in the spring of 2021, and a Watershed Coordinator was hired in June of 2021. The total funding under the DOC grant was \$300,000, distributed over 3 years. Efforts performed by the Watershed Coordinator are currently guided by a loosely structured Steering Committee.

The Trust was formed in 2020 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) conservation organization committed to charting a path to sustainability in the Tule Watershed Subbasin. With its four core priorities to manage, restore, preserve, and protect, the Trust aims to ensure the long-term community, environmental and agricultural sustainability of the San Joaquin Valley. The Trust is engaged with local landowners, NGOs, communities, and public agencies to drive innovative approaches to land use and water resource needs.

Through the Watershed Coordinator, the Trust has been working with ongoing projects that are in support of watershed planning:

- Watershed Coordinator (CA - Department of Conservation)
- Lower Deer Creek Watershed Plan (NRCS)
- Community Water Security Project (CA - Department of Water Resources)
- Multi-Benefit Land Repurposing (CA - Department of Conservation)

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<sup>1</sup> Bulletin 118 is the State's official publication on the occurrence and nature of groundwater in California. The publication defines the groundwater basin boundaries and summarizes groundwater information for each of the State's 10 hydrologic regions

Funding through this WaterSMART grant will allow the Trust and its existing partners to create a Watershed Coalition including the development of an organizational charter, bylaws and standard practices. The Watershed Coalition will then continue to support and expand the role of the watershed coordinator, hold and facilitate regular planning meetings, and develop understanding of the impacts of groundwater declines in the project area. Entities and individuals that participate in the ongoing watershed coordination—and are expected to continue to participate in the future Coalition—include a broad range of stakeholders in the Tule Subbasin, including Local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, community organizations, land trusts, agriculturalists, and environmental partners.

***Applicant Eligibility and Program Participants***

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation Trust, a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit organization located in Tulare County in the State of California, is submitting the application as a member of an existing watershed group. The Trust currently has a role as a member of the existing informal Steering Committee working on watershed-related issues. Through this funding the Trust will take the lead in helping to organize and develop the existing watershed group efforts into a Watershed Coalition that can maintain institutional longevity through staffing and structure.

The mission of the Trust includes the creation of strategic partnerships that integrate habitat enhancement with farming into one sustainable landscape. Since its founding, the Trust has worked in collaboration with local irrigation districts, groundwater sustainability agencies, other conservation organizations, nonprofits, and wildlife agencies to achieve that mission.

Through the transition of the Committee to a Coalition, informal Committee members will be given the opportunity to join the Coalition as official members, and new members will be invited.

Current regional collaborators in the watershed are listed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Regional collaborators in the watershed/Anticipated Coalition participants**

Organization (Role)	Name	Title
Pixley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA)	Eric Limas	General Manager
Self-Help Enterprises	Eddie Ocampo	Director, Community Sustainability
Tule Land and Water Conservation Trust	Frank Fernandes	President/Director
Sequoia Riverlands Trust	Logan Robertson Huecker	Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy	Abigail Hart	Project Director
Audubon California	Samantha Arthur	Working Lands Program Director



Tri-County GSA	Deanna Jackson	Executive Director
Eastern Tule GSA	Rogelio Caudillo	General Manager
Tule Basin Watershed Partnership Network	Larry Saslaw	President
UC Merced	Thomas Harmon	Chair, School of Engineering, UC Merced

## 2. Goals and Approach

### Goals

This project has three specific goals:

1. Build upon ongoing watershed coordination efforts by expanding the existing Watershed Steering Committee and formally establishing the *Tule Subbasin Watershed Coalition*. Establishment of the Coalition will include development of Coalition mission and goals, collaboration with key regional partners, and clarification of Coalition roles and workflows.
2. Engage a diverse set of stakeholders regarding water quality and quantity issues within the watershed through targeted outreach.
3. Evaluate how climate change will alter current watershed conditions and affect water management practices in the Basin, focusing on the impacts to disadvantaged communities. See Figure 2 for a map of Disadvantaged Communities (DACs).

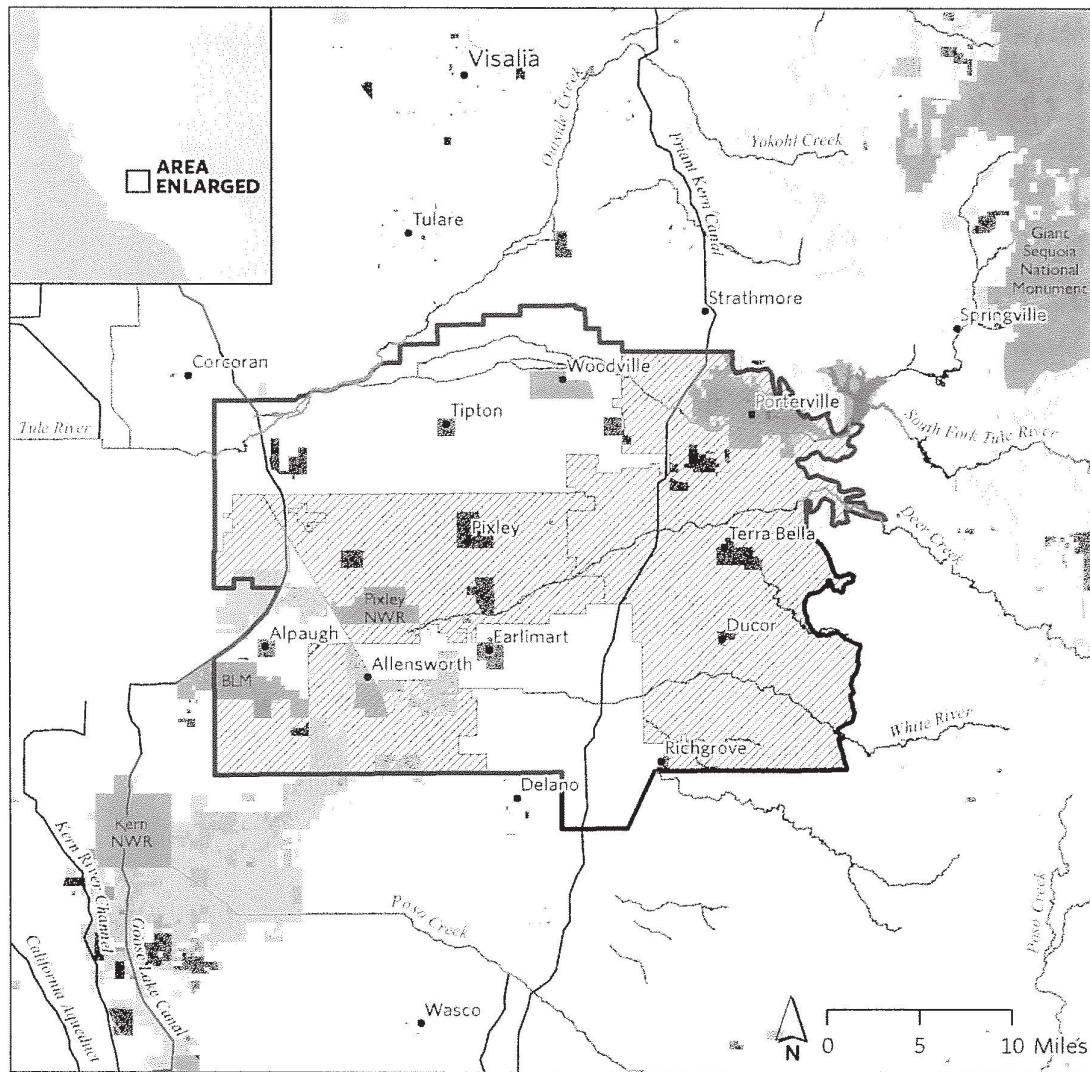
### Approach

The Trust will be responsible for the proposed activities of this Phase I Grant. The activities proposed address the following two Task Areas (Task Areas A and B) identified in *Section C.4 Eligible Projects* of the Notice of Funding Opportunity:

- **Task Area A: Watershed Group Development** – Perform activities to expand the development of the broad-based Watershed Coalition, which will bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including local underserved municipalities, irrigation districts, non-governmental organizations, and State and Federal agencies. The work of this group will include developing the group charter, mission and vision statements, developing bylaws and creating related public outreach materials.
- **Task Area B: Watershed Restoration Planning** – Conduct pre-planning activities such as collecting baseline information on the watershed and outlining a work plan to address watershed-related issues and restoration needs in the Tule Subbasin Watershed. Analyzing existing Watershed conditions to identify and prioritize specific actions or projects to improve watershed conditions, with specific focus on climate change-related impacts to watershed planning and actions and sustainable drinking water programs for the community groundwater systems.

Figure 2: Disadvantaged Communities and Natural Areas

Map 2: Disadvantaged Communities and Natural Areas



- Subbasin project area
- Priority repurposing planning areas
- Tule Subbasin Disadvantaged Communities
- Aqueduct/Canal
- Conservation Easements

- Protected Lands
- Federal
  - State
  - City or County
  - Non Profit
  - Special District

Disadvantaged Community: Median household income less than \$56,981

Data Sources:  
Rivers - NHD, Basemap - Esri,  
Protected Areas - CPAD 2021,  
Easements - CCED 2021,  
Disadvantaged Communities - ACS 2014-2018

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### 3. Scope of Work

#### a) Task Area A: Watershed Group Development



### ***Task A1: Coalition Development***

The first task of the project will include creating foundational documents in order to fully develop the Watershed Coalition membership group. In conjunction with the new watershed coordination efforts led by a Department of Conservation (DOC)-funded regional watershed coordinator, an informal group which includes members of Pixley Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Self Help Enterprises, Tule Land and Water Conservation Trust, Sequoia Riverlands Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon California, Tri-County GSA, Eastern Tule GSA, and the Tule Basin Watershed Partnership Network and University of California-Merced, has already been collaborating on regional projects under a Steering Committee Structure. A diverse contact list and designated points of contact were established to work toward the execution of the Committee's objectives under the DOC grant. Task A1 will take that preliminary work further, establishing a formal process and structure for the Coalition, including the establishment of committees and foundational documents, including a charter, and completing required project documentation (e.g., annual report of activities). Task A1 includes contracting with a third-party coordinator/facilitator to assist the Coalition in completing the scope of work. **Deliverable(s):** Foundational documents for the Coalition, fact sheet, flyer, template website and social media development.

### ***Task A2: Outreach and Education***

The second task will include the formation of an outreach and education plan. The goals of Task A2 will be two-fold: first, to distribute Coalition-developed educational materials regarding observed groundwater issues, projects, and solutions in the project area, as well as the purpose and mission of the Coalition (i.e., informing the public); and second, to continue building upon the list of diverse participants within the Coalition and include more perspectives going forward (i.e., recruiting). Educational materials will be distributed through newsletters, participation in regional events, and social media posts to reach individuals and groups within the designated project area who may not be active participants in the Coalition. Printed and digital materials will be provided in both English and Spanish.

**Performance Measure/Deliverable(s):** Educational outreach materials and an expansion of Coalition participation to ensure complete coverage of stakeholder interests.

## **b) Task Area B: Watershed Restoration Planning**

### ***Task B1: Assist Disadvantaged Communities***

Task B1 will assist disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the Tule Subbasin to engage and participate in scoping and the development of projects that align with community needs and groundwater sustainability goals within the watershed with specific focus on drinking water quality improvements. Landscape-level programs developed through the Coalition are expected to have community water security benefits and/or flood amelioration benefits. Disadvantaged communities are the most susceptible to changes in groundwater conditions and many are considered at flood risk due to their location along key hydrologic features or historical floodplains. By integrating community members early in the process, the Coalition can be more effective in protecting these communities.

**Deliverable(s):** Prepare outreach materials in both English and Spanish to reach the largest number of community members, solicit community input, and prepare a list of projects that meet expressed community needs with potential funding sources.

***Task B2: Develop Climate Change-Focused Scope of Work***

Task B2 will focus on developing regional project priorities to further groundwater sustainability in the Tule Subbasin, with specific focus on addressing the impacts of climate change on watershed conditions. Under this task, the Watershed Coalition will lead preparation of a needs analysis for groundwater recharge and surface water use under changing climate conditions. This will include designing and planning floodwater protection and groundwater recharge infrastructure and management that better captures flood waters with altered duration, intensity, frequency and timing of flood events.

**Deliverable(s):** Technical memo developing a scope of work to review Climate Change Variability Study. Create a list of strategies and potential funding sources.

***Duplication of Effort Statement***

The work proposed under this project is not funded through other programs or proposals. The efforts will uniquely build on existing work being done in the Watershed as described in the Evaluation Criteria below.

**D. Evaluation Criteria**

This section describes how the proposed project fits within the four major Evaluation Criteria of the Phase I Cooperative Watershed Management Program funding opportunity.

**1. CRITERION A: WATERSHED GROUP DIVERSITY AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE (30 Points)**

*Existing Watershed Group:* The project will target stakeholders around the Tule Subbasin, which is 477,000 acres in size.

***Subcriterion No. A.1: Watershed Group Diversity***

In 2020, a diverse group of stakeholders formed the Trust to tackle the challenging water and natural resource issues facing the watershed. The Trust's Board includes farmers and irrigators, university representatives and regional non-governmental organizations. That encouragement of collaboration and commitment to diversity is the precursor to the Watershed Coalition's efforts to target stakeholders from all backgrounds.

Declining groundwater levels affect all stakeholders in the project area—the Tule Watershed and Subbasin. Irrigators depend on a reliable source of water to maintain economically viable crop production. Municipalities and counties need reliable and high-quality groundwater for drinking water and future community development. State and local natural resources agencies have an obligation to protect and conserve the limited natural resources throughout the project area and beyond.

Formalization of a Watershed Coalition will be key to continuing that diversity. The "affected stakeholders" are included in Table 1. Most of these stakeholders have been actively participating in the Steering Committee. The Committee and its mission have broad support



from this wide array of stakeholders. Attachment 2 includes letters of support of the formation of the Watershed Coalition from varied stakeholders in and around the project area.

The Coalition will target additional affected stakeholders by providing presentations on the Watershed Coalition at regional planning and other public meetings promoting participation and awareness, and build inclusionary bylaws to ensure adequate representation of regional interests. Prospective Coalition participants will be targeted with a combination of broad outreach material (e.g., newsletters, public meetings, social media) as well as focused recruiting (e.g., intentional invitations and meetings with key local and state agency staff and other decision-makers). Given historic underrepresentation of certain groups, the Trust will make a concerted effort to recruit participation specifically from organizations representing disadvantaged communities and Tribal Governments

The Watershed Coalition will use the group's diverse connections to engage with a broader range of prospective Coalition participants, including state and federal agency personnel from California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW), U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFS), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR); County Health Districts; County Conservation Districts; local and regional decision-makers (county commissioners and city representatives); individual ranchers, irrigators, and landowners; conservation organizations; and, industry representatives.

#### *Subcriterion No. A.2: Geographic Scope*

The Watershed Coalition project area covers portions of two small to medium hydrologic units (or watersheds) defined by the U.S. Geological Survey. The Hydrologic Unit designation as defined by USGS is as follows:

Region – 18 California  
Sub Region – 1803 Tulare – Buena Vista Lakes  
Accounting Unit – 180300 Tulare Lake  
Cat Unit – 18030005 – Upper Deer Creek  
Cat Unit – 18030006 – Upper Tule

The entire Tule watershed and Subbasin is inclusive of **Units 18030005 – Upper Deer Creek and Cat Unit – 18030006 – Upper Tule**, two 8-digit USGS HUC designated watersheds. See Figure 1 map illustrating the boundaries of the watershed area.

We have chosen to work within the Tule subbasin watershed as partially designated by the 8-digit HUC USGS identification numbers. The Tule subbasin is large enough to provide a tremendous geographic and socio-economic diversity while being small enough to be able to create measurable change and form positive outcomes. The defined hydrologic boundaries also bring together a natural set of existing stakeholders who are accustomed to working together on surface and groundwater-related issues.

All members of the Committee and existing watershed efforts have their boundaries within or encompassing the Tule watershed and subbasin. The map in Figure 1 shows the locations and boundaries of participating Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs)

- Pixley ID GSA
- Eastern Tule GSA
- Tri-County Water Authority GSA

Additional partners operating in the basin include:

- Self-Help Enterprises
- The Nature Conservancy
- Audubon Society
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- University of California Merced
- Tule Basin Watershed Partnership Network

Within the Tule watershed and subbasin, there are Tribal Governments whose lands account for a portion of the watershed. Although their sovereign immunity makes them exempt from SGMA regulations, their participation and input will continue to be included when possible and where applicable.

It is also important to emphasize that the Trust, and eventually the Watershed Coalition, covers rural agriculture communities and individual homesteads that are not served by public water districts. These areas include several disadvantaged communities, small public water systems, and individual self-suppliers—all of which are important voices to bring to the Watershed Coalition. Historically, these disadvantaged communities have been underrepresented in watershed and water-related planning actions.

## 2. CRITERION B: ADDRESSING CRITICAL WATERSHED NEEDS (35 points)

### *Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues*

There are approximately 15 groundwater community water systems providing drinking water to over 100,000 residents in the Tule subbasin. Many of these municipal/community water systems in the region are facing challenges to meet water demands, and some are being forced to lower their pumps as water levels fall, switch to shallow sources that require costly treatment, or develop aquifer storage and water recovery projects.

The Tule Subbasin Watershed significantly contributes to local economic prosperity, culture, environmental biodiversity, and more importantly, to water supply reliability and viability of endangered species in the region. However, variables such as population growth, climate change, and reduced snowpack threaten the watershed's capacity to provide the reliable water supply needed to support human consumption, farming and environmental needs. As part of the Watershed Coalition development, the Trust and collaborating partners will expand on the efforts of an existing watershed effort and Steering Committee efforts to scope key projects to better understand and address the suite of critical watershed issues and needs in the Watershed.

The existing Steering Committee working group has coordinated with other stakeholders to identify critical issues occurring within the watershed:

- **Long-term water quality impacts:** The Tule subbasin, like much of the southern San Joaquin Valley, increasingly struggles with water quality. A combination of lowering aquifers and accumulation of agricultural contaminants is resulting in several long-term water degradations in the basin's aquifer. Both historic and present-day application of agricultural and industrial chemicals have resulted in unsafe drinking conditions in many areas of the subbasin, such that even when groundwater supplies are available, they are often not safe to consume. Communities experience groundwater contamination from



1,2,3-Trichloropropane, 1,2-Dibromo-3-chloropropane, Arsenic, Chromium, Nitrates and Nitrites; samples from the Earlimart Public Utility District shows 11x, 4.6x, 963x, 403x, and 27x the EWG guidelines respectively. In order to address such a complicated and long-lived issue, multi-faceted approaches to agricultural and community planning, water system development, and strategic deployment of surface water resources need to be developed through cross-sector collaborations such as the proposed Coalition (EWG.org 2022).

- **Ecosystem resiliency and species recovery:** The San Joaquin Valley as a whole has experienced severe ecosystem losses, degradation, and fragmentation. The Valley has lost approximately 95% of its wetlands and 90% of its riparian habitats<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, historical grassland and upland habitats have been lost and fragmented throughout the region, which may be addressed through strategic retirement and management of land.<sup>3</sup> Landscape cooperatives that integrate conservation and restoration objectives into planning processes through inclusion of wildlife organizations will be foundational in the Tule Subbasin's goals to both ameliorate the effects of historic degradation and to improve wildlife abundance and resiliency. Recovery plans for local federally listed species, including the Blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*), Buena Vista Lake ornate shrew (*Sorex ornatus relictus*), San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), and Tipton kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys nitratooides nitratooides*) all recognize the degradation and loss of habitat as primary factors contributing to the decline in these species. Collaborative approaches to land management and restoration presented in the changing landscape provide unprecedented opportunity for habitat expansion and species recovery.
- **Water shortage and water supply impacts from climate change:** Widely published work on climate change analysis shows significant hydrological impacts to the region,<sup>4</sup> largely due to the receding snowline<sup>5</sup> and a shift towards more rain-based precipitation. This translates into decreased water storage in the upper watershed and higher flows during storm events. Local water systems, which are designed and operated based on historical conditions, can be overwhelmed by changes in regional hydrology and are likely insufficient for flood protection or water supply as climate change advances. The Sierra Nevada elevations most vulnerable to climate change are between 5,000-8,000 feet. This is where snow albedo feedback is occurring—a cycle of amplified warming and snowmelt due to loss of reflectivity. Most of the snowpack elevation in the Upper Tule and Upper Deer Creek Watersheds are within this range, vulnerable to climate change.
- **Drought vulnerability and impacts to groundwater:** The sole source of drinking water in the watershed is groundwater supplies pumped from the aquifer, leaving the overall water supply vulnerable. Groundwater is also the sole source of irrigation water for approximately 55% of all lands within the watershed and a partial source for more than

<sup>2</sup> Warner 1984, California Riparian Systems, The Nature Conservancy 2020, Water is Life.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart et al. 2019, Habitat restoration opportunities, climatic niche contraction, and conservation biogeography in California's San Joaquin Desert.

<sup>4</sup> [https://journals.ametsoc.org/configurable/content/journals\\$002fhydr\\$002f18\\$002f12\\$002fjhm-d-16-0257\\_1.xml?ac=journals%24002fhydr%24002f18%24002f12%24002fjhm-d-16-0257\\_1.xml](https://journals.ametsoc.org/configurable/content/journals$002fhydr$002f18$002f12$002fjhm-d-16-0257_1.xml?ac=journals%24002fhydr%24002f18%24002f12%24002fjhm-d-16-0257_1.xml)

<sup>5</sup> <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/2016GL072104>

94% of all lands within the watershed. Some of the water purveyors have either a drought plan or drought ordinance in place to manage water supply shortages during droughts. However, it is estimated that more than half of the land under the County General Plans in this watershed are not served by a major water purveyor. A large percentage of the population areas and local economies that rely on small water systems or self-supplied wells are most vulnerable during droughts.

***Sub-criterion No. B2. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs or Issues***

The strategies implemented by the Coalition will build upon ongoing efforts of the Steering Committee in bringing together sometimes disparate water users and collectively moving forward toward a common goal of protecting natural resources. The first step is to formalize and solidify the Coalition membership and organizational documents, followed by education and outreach. By the end of the two-year funding period of this opportunity, the Coalition expects to have completed the basic organizational planning effort and scoped the key issues around climate change and water quality, all of which will guide the Watershed Coalition's selection of future projects.

**Task A—Watershed Group Development**

(Development of Existing Watershed Group)

***Formalize Coalition***

Under **Task Area A**, the Trust will work within the existing Steering Committee coordination effort to establish the Watershed Coalition that represents a broad range of interests, expertise, and knowledge in the Tule subbasin watershed, including groups with land use, conservation, and environmental interests.

***Catalog Coalition Priority Objectives and Project Pipeline***

Through the watershed coordinator role, meetings with local Committee members have resulted in a catalog of regional projects that meet many of the cross-organizational objectives. Collectively, this group is developing these projects and is in the process of applying for state funding to implement priority projects and identify key locales that are most at risk of exacerbated effects of groundwater degradation. This wide-spanning membership is intentional to promote advocating for balanced stewardship and use of both public and private lands.

Despite the success of this collaborative effort, there remain impediments to the long-term resiliency of the program. Momentum developed in this Watershed Committee structure risks slowing upon completion of the Department of Conservation-funded Watershed Coordinator role. But the developing relationships and progress can be sustained by consolidating these efforts into a relevant entity with a long-term presence in regional land conservation. One of the challenges with the largely ad-hoc pursuit to collaboration and conservation is reaching the desired breadth of stakeholders and ensuring an equitable approach, with inclusive decision making. Although current efforts are promising and seemingly effective, a formalization of the Coalition and decidedly improved structural clarity will be key to providing transparency and relevancy of the Coalition and its actions.

To ensure ecosystem resilience, the Coalition will provide a platform for cross-organizational interests to identify, prioritize, and fund the retirement of low-production



lands for multiple sectors and communities to benefit from land retirement and restoration. Prospective approaches include a variety of on-ground strategies ranging from wildlife-friendly aquifer recharge, to upland restoration concentration near existing conservation lands, to the strategic retirement and restoration of lands near communities susceptible to contamination and groundwater depletion.

#### *Develop Structure and Bylaws*

This project aims to build on the momentum of these informal efforts to develop and formalize a watershed Coalition that has expressly shared values and a clear shared mission and workflow. A well-defined and established Coalition will provide a venue whereby a diverse range of stakeholders can come together to collectively evaluate current watershed conditions, identify critical issues and challenges, and develop solutions to address these issues. The Coalition will also conduct outreach to regional NGOs, such as Self-Help Enterprises, to develop projects that address water supply and/or water quality needs of communities.

#### *Provide Prospective Member Outreach*

Assisting disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the Tule Subbasin will be key to the work of the Coalition, encouraging DACs to engage and participate in scoping and the development of projects that align with community needs and groundwater sustainability goals within the watershed.

#### **Task B—Watershed Restoration Planning**

The Coalition will collaborate with member groups and broader regional stakeholders to interview and convene community members to build an inventory of projects and objectives for the subbasin. Additionally, the Coalition will reach out to local agencies to identify opportunities for collaborations on public and private lands and streamline permitting workflows to cut implementation and regulatory costs where possible and facilitate conservation actions in the region; this may include collaboration to develop programmatic coverages for Best Management Practices deployed in water protection and habitat restoration actions that meet state and federal agency objectives.

The group will complete an analysis to identify and prioritize various watershed management projects. Targeted work will include:

- 1) Assist disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the Tule Subbasin to engage and participate in scoping and the development of projects that align with community needs and groundwater sustainability goals within the watershed.
- 2) Develop strategies addressing climate change and floodwater management including protection of disadvantaged communities. The Watershed Coalition team will lead in the preparation of a needs analysis for groundwater recharge under climate change conditions in the subbasin. This will match the location, sizing and design of recharge sites to adequately capture flood waters with predicted duration, intensity, rate and timing of flood event.

It is anticipated that full planning would be developed under a separate funding mechanism or opportunity. The work done under this grant would be primarily the foundational work needed to complete the next steps.

### 3. CRITERION C: IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS (25 points)

#### *Sub-criterion No. C1—Project Implementation*

The project will follow the tasks as detailed in the **Technical Project Description**, including the principles of transparency, collaboration and respect of roles and responsibilities of each partner. The Trust and its partners, along with the ongoing watershed coordination effort, have a strong track record of meeting project milestones and timeframes. To ensure the successful execution of the proposed activities under this Phase I Grant, the Trust plans to acquire support from qualified professional consultants as later described in the **Project Budget**. The proposed tasks will be completed within the required two-year timeframe as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 - Project Schedule

**2022 Watershed Coalition Program: Project Schedule**

Project Objectives	2023				2024				Task Cost
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<b>Coalition Development</b>									
Stakeholder Coordination									\$ 56,750.00
Develop Organizational Structure / Committees									
Develop Foundational Documents									
<b>Outreach &amp; Education</b>									
Formation of Outreach and Education Plan									\$ 60,100.00
Website / Social Media Development									
Community Engagement - Stakeholder Meetings									
<b>Disadvantaged Community - Scope of Work</b>									
Outreach Efforts									\$ 27,500.00
Project Cataloging									
Summary Report									
<b>Climate Change- Scope or Work</b>									
Technical Memo - Scope of Work									\$ 36,000.00
Outline Potential Funding Sources									
Summary Report									



***Sub-criterion No. C2—Building on Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts***

The proposed Watershed Coalition is intended to complement and build upon already completed or in-process planning efforts in the Tule subbasin. Watershed agencies and organizations in the Tule Subbasin watershed have a long history of successful, collaborative planning efforts. These efforts, along with a host of directly connected relevant federal, state and regional planning efforts are described below.

**Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts**

***Capinero Creek Habitat Restoration Project:*** The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)-funded Capinero Creek Habitat Restoration project is a joint effort between the Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation Trust and Reclamation to permanently retire and restore approximately 467 acres of upland habitat to alkali scrub conditions adjacent to the Pixley National Wildlife Refuge. The project includes a grant of \$4.9M provided to the Trust to complete the land purchase and conservation work. The land is currently being acquired by the Trust through BOR Central Valley Project Improvement Act funds, and habitat restoration activities are slated to begin Fall 2023. This project is significant for the region, as it represents one of the largest land retirement and restoration efforts in the basin since the 2005 restoration of the Atwell Island project. Collaboration in the restoration and monitoring will be foundational to development and public understanding of how upland restoration strategies will be completed and become effective for the region.

***Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA):*** Passed in 2014, SGMA is California’s framework for sustainable groundwater management and focuses on bringing overdrafted groundwater basins into balanced levels of pumping and recharge through cooperative local planning efforts. Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) have been developed for the Tule subbasin, which will both inform planning efforts in the watershed and provide a better overall understanding of the hydrogeologic processes (i.e., surface water and groundwater interconnections) in the watershed. The proposed activities of the watershed Coalition complement SGMA by aligning all parts of the basin. The Tule subbasin is covered in its entirety by the following GSPs:

- Lower Tule River GSP
- Eastern Tule GSP
- Delano-Earlimart GSP
- Alpaugh GSP
- Tri-County GSP
- Pixley GSP

***Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Pixley Irrigation District & The Nature Conservancy:*** In 2018, the Pixley Irrigation District (along with the Lower Tule River Irrigation District) developed an MOU with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to further cooperation in the “development of land and groundwater management practices in the Tule sub-basin in a way that protects and restores multiple benefits of a sustainably managed groundwater basin including enhanced groundwater recharge, improved water quality, efficient use of surface water for irrigation, flood risk reduction, and wildlife habitat conservation and restoration.”

Pixley's MOU with TNC has become the backbone for a working partnership that led to securing funding for the Lower Deer Creek Watershed Plan (Plan) developed under PL 83-566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program. The Plan covers an area that encompasses all or part of three GSAs within the Tule Subbasin.

***Lower Deer Creek Watershed Management Plan:*** Under PL 566, the Trust and Pixley GSA, in partnership with Audubon California and The Nature Conservancy, is preparing a watershed plan that will cover broader planning actions in the subbasin. The plan is expected to be finalized in 2022. It is currently under review by NRCS, the sponsoring agency. This Plan will serve as a joint NEPA/CEQA document that supports planning actions including those under this grant.

***Memorandum of Understanding between GSA and Local Disadvantaged Communities (DAC):*** The Watershed Coalition would build on a current MOU between subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and local DACs related to the development of the Groundwater Sustainability Plans for the region. The intent behind the MOU was to assist the small public utilities, who provide water service to DACs, in the SGMA process using the resources and coordination abilities of the GSAs with particular focus on drinking water quality needs and issues.

***The Tule River Basin Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWMP):*** Established by the State of California in 2002 through the passage of the Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Act (SB 1672), the IRWMP is a collaboration of public agencies, water suppliers, communities, cities, county, environmental groups and government representatives whose goal is to provide funding for water management solutions on a regional scale. The Watershed Coalition intends to work directly with the IRWMP on later phase project funding.

Other relevant state and local planning efforts that the proposed project complements include:

- ***California Water Action Plan (WAP):*** The centerpiece for water planning in the state, the WAP goal is to move California toward more reliable water supplies, and restore important species and habitat, and more resilient, sustainably managed water resource systems
- ***Allensworth Hamlet Plan-Tulare County Resource Management Agency 2017:*** Allensworth is currently designated as a Hamlet in the 2030 Tulare County General Plan (2012). A more precise plan is needed to increase the availability of infrastructure funding (for needs such as drinking water system improvements)
- ***Deer Creek and Tule River Groundwater Management Plan:*** The member agencies of the Deer Creek and Tule River Authority implemented a Groundwater Management Plan in 2006 (updated annually) to collectively monitor, manage, and implement groundwater activities.
- ***California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project:*** A functional network of connected wildlands essential to the continued support of California's diverse natural communities in the face of both human development and climate change. This group identified large remaining blocks of intact habitat or natural landscape and model linkages between them that need to be maintained, particularly as corridors for wildlife.



#### 4. CRITERION D: PRESIDENTIAL AND DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PRIORITIES (10 points)

The project and the work of the Watershed Coalition demonstrates support for the Administration's priorities in two specific areas:

##### *Sub-criterion No. D1. Climate Change*

Task B2 will develop regional project priorities to further groundwater sustainability in conjunction with Groundwater Sustainability Plans in the Tule Subbasin, with specific focus on addressing the impacts of climate change on the watershed.

Over 50% of the agricultural lands and 100% of the drinking water systems in the watershed rely exclusively on pumped groundwater. A centerpiece of water management in the Tule subbasin is the ability to capture and use watershed runoff through recharge of the aquifer in areas of designated recharge using existing water conveyance systems. Climate change, and the shifting of runoff from snowpack to rain flood events will require the management of the current systems and design of future systems to adapt to new conditions.

The funding provided will enable the Watershed Coalition to strengthen water supply sustainability and increase resilience to climate change by taking steps to scope out further work and analysis (Task B2) that needs to be completed to address the future climate scenarios. Technical consultants will be retained to prepare a high-level needs analysis and recommendations for follow up project development. Scoping will include recommendations for the following actions:

- System reoperation and redesign to alleviate pressures on existing infrastructure and mitigate system failure
- Protect public health through construction or expansion of floodwater retention facilities in underserved domestic areas already prone to flooding
- Construction of new facilities that can capture additional rain flood events in order to create additional biodiversity
- Review of total system capacity and identify the additional canals and recharge facilities needed to capture and retain water that is now bypassed and not able to be used for local watershed benefits

##### *Sub-criterion No. D2. Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities*

One of the primary goals of the Watershed Coalition (Task B2) will be to create a system that can engage disadvantaged communities (DACs) in the Tule Subbasin to develop projects that align with community needs and groundwater sustainability goals. The project scope includes focus on climate change-related impacts to watershed planning actions and sustainable drinking water programs for the community groundwater systems. New programs will primarily focus on drinking water quality improvements, a key problem and need in the Watershed. The Watershed Coalition will provide support (Task A1) related to outreach to the local communities. Funding in the budget includes money specifically for community outreach and linguistic support.

Further information on Watershed demographics:

- Those living within the watershed, on average, have substantially lower incomes than the rest of Tulare County. The median income within the watershed is \$26,207 and the mean income in the County is \$35,489.
- People living within the watershed experience lower employment, higher unemployment, and higher rates of poverty than people living within Tulare County, California and the United States in general. The rate of employment for all persons within the watershed is 48.1%.
- There is an estimated rate of poverty of 41.9% within the watershed, which is much higher than Tulare County and significantly higher than the United States as a whole. According to the data, there are approximately 40,000 people living under the line of poverty within the watershed.
- The United States Census estimates that children living within the watershed are most likely to be living in poverty, and the watershed contains an outsized number of children as compared to the rest of the country. In Tulare County, the rate of poverty is 27.1%. The Watershed area is all within Tulare County and includes some of the most historically underserved areas. The rate of poverty in California is 13.3%, and the rate of poverty in the United States is 13.4%.

Demographic Sources:

**1. United States Census**

Census data from 2010 to present available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

Census data prior to 2010 available at:

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

**2. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics**

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics was used to determine the unemployment rates.

Bureau of Labor Statistics available at: <https://www.bls.gov>

**3. State of California Employment Development Department**

Data from the Employment Development Department was used to determine unemployment rates. EDD information available at: <https://eddservices.edd.ca.gov>

**4. Tulare County Office of Education**

Tulare County Office of Education information available at: <http://www.tcoe.org>



## II. PROJECT BUDGET

### A. Funding Plan and Letters of Funding Commitment

Neither a separate funding plan nor any letters of funding commitment is needed because there is no match. The Trust intends to provide support funding as outlined in the budget and referenced in the Official Resolution from the Board. (Attachment 3)

### B. Budget Proposal

*There have been no expenditures to date. Table 2 shows total project cost.*

Table 2 - Total Project Cost Table

#### 2022 Watershed Coordinator Program: Total Project Cost

Source	Amount
Federal Funding Reimbursement	\$198,385.00
Cost paid by the Applicant	\$6,000.00
Value of in-kind contributions	\$7,500.00
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$211,885.00</b>

Table 3 - 2022 Budget Proposal for Cooperative Watershed Management Program

#### BUDGET DETAIL

Line Item	Hourly rate/unit cost	Number of hours/miles/Units	Grant total cost	Match (cash or in-kind)
<b>Direct Costs</b>				
Lead Watershed Coordinator	\$75.00	1000	\$75,000.00	
Watershed Support	\$55.00	500	\$27,500.00	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$102,500.00</b>	
<b>Technical Support</b>				
Community Outreach	\$5,000.00	1	\$5,000.00	
Outreach Materials	\$2,500.00	1	\$2,500.00	
Translation Services	\$1,500.00	1	\$1,500.00	
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>\$9,000.00</b>	
<b>Travel (in state only, mileage, parking, etc. at current State rates)</b>				
Travel to Site visits (local	\$0.585	10,000	\$5,850.00	

meetings)				
Conferences, Lodging & Accommodations			\$2,000.00	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$7,850.00</b>	
<b>Supplies</b>				
Estimated in-kind supplies provided by Grantee - Various postage, mailing, meeting notices and hosting etc.				\$7,500.00
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$7,500.00</b>
<b>Contract Services</b>				
Task A - Coordinator / Facilitator	\$36,000.00		\$36,000.00	
Task B - Climate Change Needs Analysis	\$25,000.00		\$25,000.00	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>\$61,000.00</b>	
<b>Technical Support</b>				
Estimated in-kind support provided by Grantee				\$6,000.00
Office 365 - Dropbox/Zoom accounts (~\$250 per month)				
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$6,000.00</b>
<b>Administrative &amp; Indirect Costs</b>	10% of Total Award (max)		<b>\$18,035.00</b>	
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$198,385.00</b>	<b>\$13,500.00</b>

*Administrative costs include compliant and reporting requirements, office space, administrative support, legal and contract review, and personnel overhead costs (Workers Comp/Gen. Liability)*

A budget proposal is included in Table 3. A total of \$198,385.00 in federal funding is requested. This funding will be utilized for two years at an average rate of \$100,000 per year. The funding will be used to increase staffing for the existing Watershed Coordinator and retain contractors to assist the Watershed Coalition with the completion of the proposed scope of work described above. There are no fringe benefits, equipment, supplies and materials, or other miscellaneous costs associated with the proposal. There are no costs to be incurred prior to the award.



## C. Budget Narrative

### *Direct Costs*

The Watershed Coordinator has a key role in current engagement and outreach among stakeholders and has extensive background working within the watershed. This program will fund watershed coordination efforts for this project on behalf of the Trust. The Watershed Coordinator will provide services under this Scope of Work at approximately 625 hours per year at a pay rate of \$85 per hour, which is inclusive of all costs. The Watershed Coordinator would add additional staffing to complete the work if needed. There are no additional fringe rates.

### *Technical Support (Contractual)*

This budget item includes funding to provide support to Coalition partners and stakeholders to develop community outreach strategies, educational materials and translation services needed to reach the largely Hispanic disadvantaged communities in the watershed. Some or all of the funding under this category may be provided under agreement to Self-Help Enterprises or similar outreach partners to assist with this task.

### *Travel*

This budget item primarily includes mileage for various contributors, including the Watershed Coordinator. The coordinator will utilize most of this budget in site visits, participation in meetings, events and conferences throughout the watershed. The mileage reimbursement rate is the 2022 Federal rate of 58.5¢ per mile. Some travel costs may also cover expenses for volunteers to participate in local community meetings.

### *Contractual Expenses*

This budget category includes fees for consultant tasks. Contractual expenses included in the budget are as follows:

1) The Trust will contract with a Coordinator/Facilitator to assist the Coalition with:

- Development of an organizational charter
- Stakeholder coordination efforts
- Preparation of educational and outreach materials
- Meeting coordination

2) The Trust will contract with technical consultants in the preparation of a needs analysis for groundwater recharge under climate change conditions in the subbasin, including the development strategies addressing climate change, floodwater management and protection of disadvantaged communities. This cost is based on reasonable and customary rates and ratios for junior- and senior-level consultants. Contracting for services will utilize a competitive procurement method where applicable.

### *Administrative & Indirect Costs*

The Trust has not received a Federal negotiated indirect cost rate. The Trust will charge 10% for administrative and indirect costs. Administrative costs include general operating expenses,

office space, phone and internet, administrative support, legal and contract review. The Trust will provide this support and services to the Watershed Coordinator, consultants and other stakeholders. This category also includes completing all reporting requirements under the grant, which are estimated at 5-7 hours per month.

***Match / In-kind Funding***

The Trust will provide approximately \$13,500 towards incidental supplies and technical support.

**III. OTHER APPLICATION MATERIALS**

**A. Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance**

The proposed project activities are all planning and development in nature, with no earthwork involved in any aspect of the project. Funding, permits, and environmental resource review for any projects resulting from the planning efforts of this grant would be secured as part of and future grant applications. See **Attachment 1** for full answers to compliance prompts.

**B. Federal Environmental, Cultural, and Historic Permits**

The project is primarily an outreach and planning project; there are no permits or approvals required for the proposed activities.

**C. Letters of Support - Attachment 2**

**D. Official Resolution - Attachment 3**

Per the Financial Assistance Interior Regulation (FAIR), 2 CFR §1402.112, applicants must state in their application if any actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of submission:

**There are no actual or potential conflicts of interest at the time of submission of the application.**



## Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

The proposed activities in this project are all planning and development in nature. There will be no earthwork involved in any aspect of the project. Projects that result from the planning efforts of this grant may require environmental resource review and permitting. Funding and permitting for those projects would be secured as part of those grant applications

*Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)? Please briefly describe all earth-disturbing work and any work that will affect the air, water, or animal habitat in the project area. Please also explain the impacts of such work on the surrounding environment and any steps that could be taken to minimize the impacts.*

- The proposed project is a planning project in nature and will not have any impacts on the surrounding environment.

*Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project?*

- No Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat will be impact by the planning efforts of this project.

*Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as "Waters of the United States"? If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have.*

- There will be no wetlands or waterways impacts as a result of this proposed planning and outreach grant.

*When was the water delivery system constructed?*

- Several water delivery systems exist within the watershed. The earliest water delivery systems were built in the 1890's with the federal Reclamation systems constructed in the 1950's.

*Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? If so, state when those features were constructed and describe the nature and timing of any extensive alterations or modifications to those features completed previously.*

- The proposed project will result in no changes or modifications to any water delivery or irrigation system.

*Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? A cultural resources specialist at your local Reclamation office or the State Historic Preservation Office can assist in answering this question.*

- This proposed project is a planning and outreach project so no impacts to any existing, or eligible buildings, structures, or historic features will be made.

*Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?*

- No archaeological sites will be impacted as a result of this project

*Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?*

- This project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse impact on low income or minority populations. With this project the Trust hopes to engage with a more diverse group of stakeholders in the watershed so that we can better steward our relationship and manage the water resources in the watershed.

*Will the proposed project limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands?*

- The proposed project will not limit access to, or the ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on tribal lands.

*Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area?*

- No. The proposed planning project will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species.

## Federal Environmental, Cultural, and Historic Permits

The project is primarily an outreach and planning project, there are no permits or approvals required for the proposed activities.





CALIFORNIA CHAPTER  
830 S Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811  
(415) 777-0487  
nature.org

March 23, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

I would like to express my support, on behalf of The Nature Conservancy, for The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District's application for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

We support the efforts described in the application to (1) Build upon already established watershed coordination efforts (2) Formalize the Watershed Technical Advisory Committee (3) Establish a Tule Basin Watershed Coalition (4) Develop an evaluation of how climate change will alter current watershed practices with specific focus on impacts to underserved communities.

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

The Nature Conservancy supports the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abigail Hart".

Abigail Hart  
Project Director, Water Program  
The Nature Conservancy



*A Nonprofit Housing and Community Development Organization*

March 28, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District is applying for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) supports the efforts described in the application to (1) Build upon already established watershed coordination efforts (2) Formalize the Watershed Technical Advisory Committee (3) Establish a Tule Basin Watershed Coalition (4) Develop an evaluation of how climate change will alter current watershed practices with specific focus on impacts to underserved communities.

SHE is a nationally recognized community development organization whose mission is to work together with low-income families to build and sustain healthy homes and communities. SHE is committed in supporting community participation in regional water management, groundwater sustainability planning, and building long-term water management capacity and expertise in rural communities. We are actively involved in Sustainable Groundwater Management Act implantation, currently serving in an advisory or technical assistance capacity on the Eastern Tule and Lower Tule GSAs.

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

SHE the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,

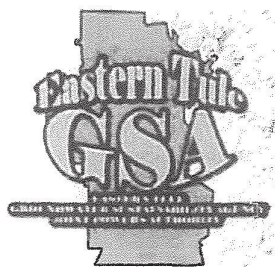
Thomas J. Collishaw  
President/CEO  
Self-Help Enterprises



8445 W. Elowin Court • P.O. Box 6520 • Visalia, CA 93290

Phone (559) 651-1000 • Fax (559) 651-3634 • [gateway@selfhelpenterprises.org](mailto:gateway@selfhelpenterprises.org) • [www.selfhelpenterprises.org](http://www.selfhelpenterprises.org)





**EASTERN TULE  
GROUNDWATER  
SUSTAINABILITY  
AGENCY  
JOINT POWERS  
AUTHORITY**

**Eric Borba**  
Chairman

**Steve Kisling**  
Vice-Chairman

**Rogelio Caudillo**  
General Manager

**Aubrey A. Mauritson**  
Legal Counsel

**City of Porterville**

**County of Tulare**

**Kern-Tulare Water  
District**

**Porterville Irrigation  
District**

**Saucelito Irrigation  
District**

**Teapot Dome Water  
District**

**Terra Bella Irrigation  
District**

**Vandalia Water  
District**

**[info@easterntulegsa.com](mailto:info@easterntulegsa.com)  
559-781-7660**

**881 W. Morton Ave  
Suite D  
Porterville, CA 93257**

March 28, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District is applying for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

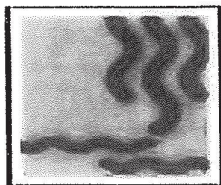
We support the efforts described in the application to (1) Build upon already established watershed coordination efforts (2) Formalize the Watershed Technical Advisory Committee (3) Establish a Tule Basin Watershed Coalition (4) Develop an evaluation of how climate change will alter current watershed practices with specific focus on impacts to underserved communities.

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

The Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Agency supports the efforts by the Trust to create locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,

**Rogelio Caudillo**  
General Manager



# Pixley

SINCE 1958

Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency

**Frank Junio**  
*President*

March 28, 2022

**Russell Schott**  
*Vice President*

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office

**Bill De Groot**  
*Director*

Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan

Mail Code: 86-63000

P.O. Box 25007

Denver, CO 80225

**Randall Parreria**  
*Director*

Dear Ms. Morgan:

**Neal Westbrook**  
*Director*

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District is applying for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

**Eric Limas**  
*General Manager*

**Beth Grote-Lewis**  
*Assessor*

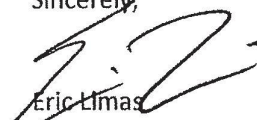
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**Alex Peltzer**  
*Legal Counsel*

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

The Pixley Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency support the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,



Eric Limas  
General Manager

357 E. Olive Avenue  
Tipton, Ca 93272  
Office: (559) 686-4716  
Fax: (559) 686-0151  
Email: ltrid@ltrid.org





## United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Bakersfield Field Office  
35126 McMurtrey Ave.  
Bakersfield, CA 93308  
[www.blm.gov/office/bakersfield-field-office](http://www.blm.gov/office/bakersfield-field-office)

March 22, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

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The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

The BLM Bakersfield Field Office Managers support the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Garcia

Field Manager

U.S. Department of Interior Regions #8/10

Bureau of Land Management

Bakersfield Field Office

INTERIOR REGIONS 8 & 10 • LOWER COLORADO BASIN & CALIFORNIA-GREAT BASIN

ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, NEVADA, OREGON\*

\* PARTIAL

March 28, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District is applying for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

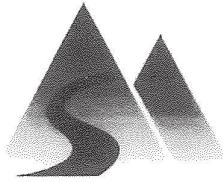
I support the efforts described in the application to (1) Build upon already established watershed coordination efforts (2) Formalize the Watershed Technical Advisory Committee (3) Establish a Tule Basin Watershed Coalition (4) Develop an evaluation of how climate change will alter current watershed practices with specific focus on impacts to underserved communities.

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

I support the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,  
Mike Chrisman  
Owner, Chrisman Ranches





# Lower Tule River

SINCE 1950

## Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Tom Barcellos  
*President*

March 29, 2022

Jim Costa  
*Vice President*

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office

Alex Garcia  
*Director*

Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Joshua Pitigliano  
*Director*

Dear Ms. Morgan:

Frank Mendonsa  
*Director*

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District is applying for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

Eric Limas  
*General Manager*

Beth Grote-Lewis  
*Assessor-Collector*

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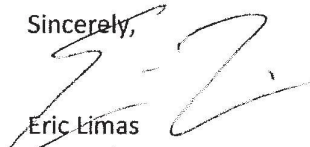
Alex Peltzer  
*Legal Counsel*

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

The Lower Tule River Irrigation District Groundwater Sustainability Agency support the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

357 E. Olive Avenue  
Tipton, Ca 93272  
Office: (559) 686-4716  
Fax: (559) 686-0151  
Email: ltrid@ltrid.org

Sincerely,



Eric Limas  
General Manager



# Audubon | CALIFORNIA

March 28, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

The Tule Basin Land and Water Conservation District is applying for a Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I grant to expand on existing watershed coordination work in the Tule subbasin and watershed. The Trust shares our common objective, a region brought into balance through the creation of strategic partnerships that integrates habitat enhancement, community water supply and sustainable farming into one healthy ecosystem in the Tule Subbasin and watershed.

We support the efforts described in the application to (1) Build upon already established watershed coordination efforts (2) Formalize the Watershed Technical Advisory Committee (3) Establish a Tule Basin Watershed Coalition (4) Develop an evaluation of how climate change will alter current watershed practices with specific focus on impacts to underserved communities.

The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

Audubon California supports the efforts by the Tule Trust to create locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed. Audubon supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,

Samantha Arthur  
Working Lands Program Director  
Audubon California





March 28, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

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The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

Tri-County Water Authority supports the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,  
Deanna Jackson  
Executive Director

# South Valley Water Association

**President**  
Joe Ferrara

**Vice President**  
Kelley Hampton

**Executive Director**  
Daniel G. Vink

**General Counsel**  
Alex Peltzer

## **Member Districts**

Delano-Earlimart I.D.  
Exeter I.D.  
Ivanhoe I.D.  
Pixley I.D.  
Shafter-Wasco I.D.  
Stone Corral I.D.  
SSJMUD

3746 W. Mineral King Ave.  
Visalia, CA 93291  
Tel: (559) 372-2400  
Fax: (559) 553-6221

March 29, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Ms. Morgan:

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The Trust is well positioned to achieve this broad vision based on their already established track record of working with a diverse set of stakeholders across the region. Those efforts have become a model for community interests joining together to achieve a common objective.

South Valley Water Association supports the efforts by the Trust to create a locally developed recommendations that will identify long term solutions for the Tule subbasin and watershed and supports their request for funding under the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.

Sincerely,



Daniel G. Vink  
Executive Director



## **Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust**

### **Official Resolution of the Board of Directors**

WHEREAS, the Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust, a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in good standing has legal authority to enter into an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation.

WHEREAS, the Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust shall enter into an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation concerning the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant.

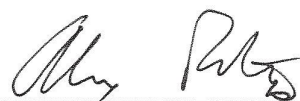
WHEREAS, the Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust agrees to provide in-kind and direct cost support totaling \$13,500 toward the Cooperative Watershed Management efforts.

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Reclamation requires an Official Resolution confirming Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust will work with the Bureau of Reclamation to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement.

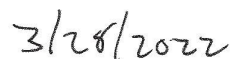
RESOLVED, the Board of Directors of the Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust hereby authorizes Alex Peltzer, Board Secretary, to act on behalf of Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust to review and approve the application submitted.

RESOLVED, the Board of Directors of Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust hereby authorizes Dan Vink, Executive Director of Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust to have the authority to apply for the WaterSMART grant and enter into an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to meet all requirements of the grant.

RESOLVED, the signature of the Secretary of the Board of Directors signifies the review and approval of the application submitted.



Alex Peltzer, Secretary - Tule Basin Land & Water Conservation Trust



Date