

## Project Summary Sheet

Project Name: Kelso Creek

Tracking No: 4005

Location: Weldon, CA

County: Kern

Project Sponsor: Kern County Water Agency

Point of Contact: Rick Iger, (661) 634-1469, riger@kcwa.com

Co-applicant(s): None.

Assembly District: 32

Senate District: 18

Project Description (including size): Kelso Creek flows generally northward into the south fork of the Kern River at the town of Weldon, about 15 miles east of Lake Isabella. At Weldon, 259 acres of the Kelso Creek floodplain have been developed into residential property and now contain 129 dwellings, including many mobile homes. Development was facilitated by building a low levee within the floodplain along the east edge of the creek channel. The levee is sufficient for somewhat less than a ten-year flood event. Improvements are also vulnerable to flows from three tributaries entering from the east behind the levee. The project seeks to purchase improved properties and removing improvements, purchase flowage easements, provide floodproofing, and purchase unimproved property to preclude future development.. One key unimproved parcel consists of 105 acres of native vegetation. Owners of an estimated 86 properties are willing to participate in the program. The purchased land would be permanently dedicated to wildlife habitat, cleaned up, and restored to natural condition. The applicant plans to offer six-month leaseback of purchased improved property to give owners time to relocate suitably. Flowage easements and floodproofing would be accompanied by the owner's waiver of future flood liability

Flood Benefits: The project would reduce the present population of 229 persons in the floodplain and preclude development of lots for an estimated additional 210. The applicant estimates \$4.5 million in damages would occur for each major flood that exceeds levee capacity; an estimated four times in 30 years. The applicant estimates that 65% of the affected properties would be purchased or floodproofed, resulting in an annual reduction in flood damages of \$390,000. If the project could embrace all affected properties, the levee would be abandoned and an estimated annual maintenance cost of \$37,000 would be saved. Flood velocities, depths, siltation, and therefore damages downstream would be reduced an unstated amount by opening up this floodplain area to wider flow, producing more infiltration, more sediment deposition in the subject area, and somewhat more transitory storage.

Agricultural Benefits: None claimed.

Agricultural Land Conserved, acres, if any: None.

Wildlife Benefits: USFWS in 1980 identified Kelso Creek as a significant habitat protection opportunity. It is situated between the Audubon Society's Kern River Preserve and a significant riparian area upstream on Kelso Creek. This section is a heavily used avian spring bird migration corridor, in which the project would reduce dog and domestic animal predation. Habitat would be improved by removing exotic plants, reducing ground water pumping, increasing the number of native cottonwoods, and increasing the stands of Kern Joshua tree in the area. Increase in cottonwoods and Kern Joshua trees would provide nesting for hawks and owls. Several sensitive and rare species would benefit from the project, including the yellow-eared pocket mouse, burrowing owl, California horned lizard, prairie falcon, Charlotte's phacelia, and Kelso Creek monkey flower.

Wildlife Habitat Conserved, acres, if any: Up to 259 acres, but likely to be somewhat less, perhaps near 200. Depends on number of willing participants.

Total area conserved: Up to 259, but more likely near 200.

Other Benefits: Improved groundwater recharge and reduced pumping; assistance to residents of the area, where the median age is 50 and the median income is under \$20,000 per year.

Total Cost: \$ 5,206,000

FPCP Cost: \$ 4,994,000

Funding Partners and Share of Cost:

Local Funds	\$ 106,000
In-kind Contributions from KCWA	<u>106,000</u>
TOTAL	\$ 212,000