KINGS RIVER FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Annual Implementation Plan

Program Year 2026 - 2027

Submitted to:

Executive Policy Committee

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Introduction

The following are the planned program elements for program year 2026 - 2027. These elements align with the Long-Term Implementation Plan and support the creation of the annual budget.

The results will be documented in the Annual Technical Report; which will also include additional supporting documents, such as the annual population surveys and a final budget to actual report.

I. Program - Support Elements (SE)

SE1 Fishery Habitat Master Plan

Section G(1)(f) of the Framework Agreement (funding/projects) discusses habitat improvements to enhance fish and wildlife resources in the lower Kings River. In 2021-2022 the KRFMP contracted with Cramer Fish Sciences to develop two enhancement projects and 30% designs on selected projects vetted by the TSC: Gravel Augmentation below the ACOE Bridge, and Thorburn Channel Enhancement. The TSC will continue pursuing grant funding for project design, permitting, and construction.

The TSC will continue to act on and improve the Thorburn Channel Maintenance and Enhancement Plan for element SE1, with a goal of making small improvements over time. The TSC was directed to proceed with acquiring the necessary permits to perform Phase 1 and Phase 2 items: River/headgate sediment removal and Downstream channel control removal. The estimated budget required for these actions is $6,000, which does not include the annual maintenance under *program element M2*. Additionally, several permit items require CDFW and CEQA permitting for removing sediment from the channel. The estimated budget required for these actions is $30,000. The total budget estimate for actions under SE1 is $36,000.

SE2 Public Education

As provided in Section G(1)(n) of the Framework Agreement, the Program will continue to engage in public awareness and education activities related to the Program. The Public Advisory Group (PAG) has been actively meeting and engaging the TSC in discussions regarding the program. To encourage the continued involvement and effectiveness, the TSC recommends continued funding of Public Education activities. Some activities that have been identified for funding include maintenance of the website, and the manufacturing and placement of fishing regulation and educational signs. The program will continue efforts to update the KRFMP website http://krfmp.org on a regular basis to provide timely public information and a repository of program documents. The program will continue to aid with safety and informational sign placement in public use areas and continue to involve local school districts and universities in educational opportunities with the incubator building, annual fish population survey and other sampling events. Public information will also be circulated on river flows and water temperature, through sharing of the monthly Pine Flat Reservoir temperature profiles and the daily hydrologic and climatic summary reports throughout the temperature management period when in effect. The budget also includes publication cost for printing additional KRFMP informational brochures, outreach materials, and support of Kings River Clean-up efforts.

SE3 Monitoring (Baseline, Project, and Special Study)

Section G(1)(k) of the Framework Agreement "Development of Criteria/Monitoring" calls for the agencies to carry out a monitoring program to determine the effects of various elements of the programs and the overall status of the fishery.

For the 2026-2027 program year, we propose a flexible monitoring plan that could occur dependent on work related restrictions or other unforeseen circumstances. The following monitoring activities are meant to outline potential budget needs. The TSC may act on these monitoring items at the direction of the ExCom dependent on what is allowed at that time.

Monitoring without Budget Need:

Infrastructure for real-time monitoring of temperature is in place at the ACOE Bridge Weir and Fresno Weir, and dissolved oxygen monitoring is in place at the ACOE Bridge Weir. Along with measurements of flow, these real-time monitors allow for adaptive temperature management. Within the Reservoir, temperature is monitored at levels associated with all water release points, allowing for blended water temperature calculations. Periodic profiles of reservoir temperature and dissolved oxygen are taken to identify habitat quality within the reservoir and potential river conditions from river releases. No planned budget for monitoring associated with infrastructure.

1. **Creel/Angler Survey and Trout Tag Survey**

   CDFW will plan on continuation of an angler creel survey in 2026-2027, to assess angler catch rates, angler satisfaction and angler demographics. The angler creel survey will be run in conjunction with the supplemental trout tagging survey to determine survivorship, mortality rates and angler harvest rates of supplemental trout release groups. Angler surveys may be performed ten days each month for eight months (August – May). The TSC will discuss variations of the angler survey to best pair monitoring efforts. Angler creel surveys will be performed by two CDFW staff. The TSC will explore alternative staffing options if CDFW staffing restrictions continue.

   CDFW is planning a tagging survey using supplemental trout provided by a contracted hatchery (see P1 – Rainbow Trout Supplemental Stocking Plan). The study aims to determine survivorship, mortality rates and angler harvest rates of supplemental trout release groups. CDFW has 5,500 Floy Tags on hand. The Floy Tags were ordered in 11 solid colors (500 each in brown, purple, yellow, blue, red, gray, green, white, fluorescent green, fluorescent yellow and orange). CDFW is proposing to tag 500 trout each from 11 groups of supplemental trout released (November – March).

Monitoring with Budget Need:

1. **Annual Fish Population Survey**
   In cooperation with CDFW, KRCD may conduct a fisheries population survey. The annual survey typically takes place at six locations, to track population dynamics and fish assemblages in the lower Kings River. The TSC will continue fish survey sampling within the Thorburn Channel coincident with the Annual Fish Population Survey. A budget is included for the survey, which included equipment replacement and supplies for the survey might include equipment batteries, nets, waders, boots, gloves, and food for volunteers.

2. **Episodic Monitoring**
   Additional monitoring efforts will be considered as applicable in the upcoming year, which may include snorkel surveys, water quality sampling, hook and line surveys, observations of geomorphic channel condition, and other studies appropriate for monitoring the fishery. This additional monitoring may also include sampling for episodic events on as needed basis. A $5,000 budget is included to cover episodic monitoring needs.

SE4 Incubator Facility (eggs)

Section G(1) of the Framework Agreement includes an element addressing adaptive management (Section 1b) and the stocking program (Section 1j). The fisheries population survey results suggest that rainbow trout from the incubator may be present in survey reaches. Annually, two to three cycles of diploid rainbow trout eggs are purchased for incubation, each season (November – April) at a cost of approximately $31/thousand-eggs. When ready, each round of fry will be released into multiple river locations at approximately eight-week intervals. River conditions and other factors may limit the number of fry released and the number of incubator cycles per season. For FY 2026-2027, two to three cycles of egg incubation are planned, due to expected 'Exhibit C' flow regime this fall and winter. The TSC may also decide to do less cycles of eggs with larger numbers of eggs, such as two 100,000-130,000 egg cycles in later months when colder temperatures or higher flows are expected. However, capacity in the raceways is a limiting factor. Estimated raceway carrying capacity is approximately 10 lbs./raceway for 1" fish. An estimate from recent releases is about 38 lbs. total (9.6 lbs./raceway), for ~72,000 fish, which may be a conservative estimate.

Estimated cost, including shipping for two cycles of 130,000 eggs, is $9,200. Adding a third cycle of 75,000 eggs in the spring months would increase the cost to $12,700. For 2026-2027 the budget for rainbow trout eggs is $13,000.

For 2026-2027 funding for eggs is partially reimbursable, through Central Valley Community Foundation funding (grant), in cooperation with the Kings River Conservancy (KRC).

SE5 Reservoir Projects (Pine Flat Reservoir)

The purpose of this element is to allocate money in this program year's budget to accomplish in-reservoir Aquatic Resource Enhancement Goals in Exhibit "A" of the

Framework Agreement. US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Pine Flat staff and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Reservoir Biologist seek to work with the KRFMP on new habitat strategies in the upcoming program year. The KRFMP routinely commits annual funds in support of reservoir habitat projects. Project proposals for 2026-2027 include purchase and placement of commercially available habitat structures – approximately $10,000.

II. Program - Maintenance (M)

M1 Incubator Facility

Routine operations and maintenance activities will continue in the facility as needed in support of Section G(1)(f) of the Framework Agreement - Funding/Projects. This may also include, but is not limited to, regular generator checks, cleaning the pumps and pump components, cleaning/disinfecting or replacing gauges, hoses, raceways and raceway components as necessary, maintaining ventilation systems, plumbing and pest control measures.

The TSC evaluated future options for the incubator building to determine if capacity can be increased, including physical building expansion, additional raceways, water temperature control, or other options to increase egg cycle capacity or the number of cycles per season. The ExCom considered program costs, personnel resources, and benefits of the options with no budget impact this program year.

M2 Thorburn Spawning Channel

Section G(1)(f) of the Framework Agreement - Funding/Projects - discusses fish habitat improvements to enhance fish and wildlife resources in the lower Kings River. The program's first habitat improvement project, the Thorburn Spawning Gravel Project, was constructed in spring 2000.

Work will be needed to clear trails, spray weeds, and general upkeep of the access area. These maintenance activities are estimated at $2,800.

III. Program – Plans (P)

P1 Rainbow Trout Supplemental Stocking Plan

Stocking has been an element of the Kings River Fisheries Management Program, included in Section G(1)(j) of the Framework Agreement, and will continue through 2026-2027. Supplemental trout stocking numbers are called out in the following table pulled from the Kings River Fishery Management Program Lower Kings River 2018 Supplemental Rainbow Trout Stocking Plan. The program will utilize program funds for the purchase of additional CDFW and/or private hatchery produced diploid rainbow trout for the Lower Kings River (Reach 1 and Reach 2) per Table 2.

For 2026-2027, one or more commercial hatcheries will be contracted to provide supplemental stocking. Outlined in Table 1 and depending on availability, 20,000-50,000 Catchable size rainbow trout (~3 fish per pound) will be stocked. We have budgeted $80,000 for Catchable size stocking. Delivery of all supplemental stocking is planned from

October 2026 through March 2027. Potential monitoring of a sub-set of the supplemental stocking is outlined in SE3 – Monitoring.

For 2026-2027, the program will explore options to increase stocking truck access to the river. The goal will be to spread out of fish throughout the lower Kings River at stocking locations in Reach 1 and Reach 2. We have budgeted $10,000 for stocking truck access improvement.

Table 1: KRFMP Supplemental stocking information.

	Incubator Fry	Hatchery Fingerling	Sub-catchable	Catchable	Trophy
Number/Year Stocked by CDFW	0	Variable depending on Hatchery production	25,000	20,000	1,500 (as available)
KRFMP Augmentation	300,000	0	0	20,000 - 50,000	1,000 [1]
Total Annual Stocking	300,000	Variable depending on Hatchery production	25,000 [2]	60,000	2,500
Trout Length (inches)	N/A	N/A	4 - 6	10 - 13 (3/lb)	>16" (>2.5ibs.) Age 2-3yrs.
% Put-and-Take Zone	30	100	70	80	75 [3]
% Catch-and-Release Zone	70	0	30	20	25
Stocking Season[4]	Fall/Winter, Spring	Variable	Fall/Winter	Variable [5]	Fall/Winter
Estimated % Angler Harvest	1	N/A	8	59.8	59.8
Estimated # Angler Harvest	3,000	N/A	1,920	35,880	1,495

[1] Variable and will only occur based on supplemental stocking needs i.e. needs may shift to catchable allotment / broodstock requirements.

[2] The numbers of sub-catchable trout planted is expected to vary among years in response to factors such as high flows, seasonally elevated water temperatures, and demands for catchable trout to support the recreational fishery (sub-catchable trout may be held in the hatchery and grown to catchable size prior to release depending on management objectives and other factors within each year).

[3] CDFW routinely plants trophy trout in the put-and-take zone. Trophy trout produced through KRFMP funding augmentation may be planted in the catch-and-release zone as well as the put-and-take zone of the lower river.

[4] In accordance with the California Fish and Game Commission policy, trout are not stocked when water temperatures are greater than 75 F (24 C). Trout may not be planted from the hatchery during periods of flood control releases or high flows that limit access to planting locations or risk staff safety.

[5] The seasonal period of trout planting may vary among years in response to a variety of factors such as seasonal high flows (e.g., catchable trout may be planted at a reduced rate if river flows are greater than 2,000 cfs). CDFW base stocking practices may occur year-round.

IV. Projected Budget for Program Year –2026-2027

The Fisheries Management Program funding for the elements listed below will be allocated and utilized as listed within the text of this document upon the approval of the Executive Policy Committee.

Table 2: 2026-2027 Projected Budget

Element #	Description	Projected Budget	
SE1	**Fisheries Habitat Master Plan**		**$ 36,000**
1	Thorburn Channel Maintenance Plan	$ 6,000	
2	Permitting	$ 30,000	
SE2	**Public Education**		**$ 7,600**
1	Website Maintenance	$ 3,100	
2	General Public Education	$ 1,200	
3	Cleanup Supplies and Materials	$ 3,300	
SE3	**Monitoring Total**		**$ 13,000**
1	Annual fish survey	$ 8,000	
2	Episodic Monitoring	$ 5,000	
SE4	**Incubator Facility (eggs)**		**$ 13,000**
SE5	**Reservoir Projects**		**$ 10,000**
M1	**Incubator Facility**		**$ 1,000**
M2	**Thorburn Spawning Channel**		**$ 2,800**
P1	**Supplemental Stocking Plan**		**$ 90,000**
1	Fish Stocking	$ 80,000	
2	Permanent Stocking Access Improvement	$ 10,000	
Total Projected Budget 2026-2027			**$ 173,400**
Grants			$ (10,000)
Net KRFMP Budget 2026-2027			**$ 163,400**