



Case study

The City of Bakersfield's Kern River Flow and Municipal Water Program

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Kern River Flow and Municipal Water Program aims to increase river flow by allowing several thousand acre-feet of potentially available water to flow down the Kern River channel seasonally and percolate into the groundwater basin below. The City of Bakersfield (City) would then draw from this recharged basin to support future municipal water supply demands. This program supports the City's plans and policies to enhance and protect the natural resources of the Kern River while providing a reliable municipal water supply.

OUR ROLE

Montrose has been pivotal in assisting the City of Bakersfield with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance for the Kern River Flow and Municipal Water Program. Our contributions included:

- Providing research and expert testimony to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) during the review, hearing, and decision process regarding the river's fully appropriated status.
- Preparing a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Program.
- Supporting the City with an application to the SWRCB to request a portion of the unappropriated water for the River Flow and Municipal Use Program.

CHALLENGES

We worked closely with the City of Bakersfield and other stakeholders to ensure environmental constraints were fully considered during the project planning process. This involved:

- Developing strategies for working with regulatory agencies on the development of a diversion facility.
- Integrating surface flow and groundwater modeling results into the EIR analysis of the proposed program and alternatives.
- Evaluating potential effects on future population growth and subsequent indirect effects due to the removal of an obstacle to growth.

OUTCOME

The City was successful in its efforts, with the SWRCB ruling that the Kern River was no longer fully appropriated and that several thousand acre-feet of water were now available for appropriation. We continue to support the City of Bakersfield with its SWRCB water rights application process and other regulatory permitting and compliance needs.