

# SAFER Drinking Water Advisory Group Meeting #2

## Meeting Notes | June 9, 2022

### Overview

The Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Advisory Group (AG) meeting included discussions on the SAFER drinking water Needs Assessment and draft Fund Expenditure Plan (FEP) priorities. Staff shared written updates on PFAS funding, Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds Intended Use Plans, Technical Assistance program, 2022 legislation, and upcoming SAFER events and timelines.

### Drinking Water Needs Assessment Discussion

#### Risk Assessment for Public Water Systems

- Need for more data on cost of implementation and treatment burden for water systems impacted by water quality risk indicator, including constituents of emerging concerns.
- Agreement with prioritizing support for smaller systems and smaller domestic wells and a concern about expanding the analysis to include medium sized systems.
- Recommendation to include public water system (PWS) service area boundaries and to indicate where domestic wells are located within PWS boundaries.

#### Affordability Assessment

- Concerns with using shut-off data that does not capture debt/payment program options and does not include data of individual affordability issues; agreement with using debt as an indicator.
- Concerns with the affordability challenge for communities relying on bottled or hauled water.
- Agreement with exploring impacts on affordability between renters and homeowners by breaking down information of individual water bill vs. multiple home water bills.

### Draft Fund Expenditure Plan Priorities Discussion

#### FEP Priorities

- Positive feedback about the draft FEP priorities; negative feedback on speed of processes.
- Recommendation to prioritize state small water systems and domestic wells at high risk for drought and fires, wells with high water quality risk, systems with less than 5,000 connections, systems with operations and maintenance needs, systems with high unaffordability burden, and systems on the Human Right to Water list.
- Recommendation to incorporate metrics for project acceleration to each FEP priority, or to move the “Expedite Planning” priority higher on the list.

#### FEP Allocations

- Confusion about funding being allocated to TA and whether enough funding was being allocated to finance construction/ infrastructure projects.
- Concerns with funding barriers for tribes caused by the requirement of a consent to suit in state court/limited waiver of sovereign immunity.

- Recommendation to provide the full scope of all SAFER funding streams/allocations to better understand funding gaps, where to anticipate greater demand in funding, or if funds are being used appropriately to fill in those gaps.
- Recommendation to focus on domestic wells, state small water systems, and small community water systems, O&M pilot, and workforce development.

### FEP Planning Process

- Recommendation to consider a more holistic approach to have TA providers work with the water system from funding application process to completion of construction.
- Recommendation to expedite the planning process and to keep the funds open continuously.
- Recommendation to provide O&M funding guidelines, instructions on how to get O&M funding to communities, and long-term plan for O&M projects that pair up with consolidation, administrator, or capital improvement plans.

### General comments and questions:

- General concern regarding counties lacking responsiveness in developing solutions or offering support to state small water systems and domestic wells. Request for the State to hold counties accountable and help advocate for domestic well owners..
- Recommendation to meet with affected communities, understand their needs, and develop solutions collaboratively.
- Recommendation to add climate change and fire risks as indicators in the Needs Assessment.
- Concerns about technical barriers impacting rural and isolated communities' ability to participate in meetings and workshops.
- Concerns that smaller systems do not have capacity to comply with SB 552 requirements
- Concerns about water systems losing state tax exemptions if required to meter all service connections this could lead to an increase in customer rates and impact water affordability.
- Concerns about new MCLs impacting water systems' ability to invest in treatment technology.
- Interest in more information about the county/regional domestic well and state small water system program.
- What happens when a water system's debt is sent to the county for collections?
- What funding opportunities are available for mobile home parks reliant on septic systems?
- Is there funding available for PFAS testing?
- Are there wastewater funding sources for using effluent for flushing toilets?
- Are there plans for a Cr6 treatment pilot, specifically stannous chloride treatment technology?

### Public Comments

- Accelerate solutions for communities living with unsafe drinking water for a long time.
- SAFER funds should not go to entities like Management Zones or Groundwater Sustainability Agencies that should be held financially responsible.
- Priority to work with counties to address domestic well/state small water systems and Black, Indigenous, people of color communities to implement the racial equity resolution.
- Does the Dashboard list the status of funding for "Failing and At-Risk systems"?
- Is the DAC designation based on census block, tract, or place?

### AG Member Announcements

- Coachella Regional Project – State Water Board funded \$23.4M for a regionalization project to construct pipelines to consolidate up to 37 water systems. This project requires much work and

coordination between the community, TA providers, community groups, local water system, the Torrez Martinez Tribe, and Riverside County.

- UCLA panel – SAFER AG participated in panel to address root causes of water issues and water injustice from an advocacy perspective.
- Coalition of LA organizations – Met on 6/8/22 to discuss the state budget and possible water investments in urban settings.

### AG Attendance (P= present, A= absent)

Horacio Amezcuita: P

Sergio Carranza: P

Kassy Chauhan: P

Victor Chavarin Jr: A

Sandra Chavez: P

Esther Espinoza: A

Cástulo Estrada: P

Jennifer Hazard: P

Jianmin Huang: P

Don James: P

Rami Kahlon: P

Maria Luisa Muñoz: P

Camille Pannu: P

Michael S. Prado Sr.: A

Jonathan Rash: P

Michael Rincon: P

Emily Rooney: P

Isabel Solorio: A

James Sullivan: P

Ethel See Winchell: A

### State Water Board Attendance

**Division of Drinking Water:** Andrew Altevogt, Michelle Frederick, Kristyn Abhold

**Division of Financial Assistance:** Meghan Tosney, Jasmine Oaxaca, Jeff Wetzel

**Office of Public Participation:** Adriana Renteria, Marina Perez, Haydee Yonamine, Itzel Vasquez-Rodriguez, Elizabeth Herrera, Caroline Pradeau Fonseca

**Office of Chief Counsel:** Lauren Marshall, Douglas Bojack