

## **CENTRAL COAST REGION ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROJECT UPDATE**

Central Coast Water Board staff continuously work to prioritize and leverage limited resources to advance environmental justice in the Central Coast Region. Over the past several years and in close coordination with agencies, organizations, and community partners, the Central Coast Water Board has determined that the most critical environmental justice priority is to protect public health by ensuring safe drinking water and supporting efforts to build local environmental justice capacity in underrepresented communities. To do this effectively, staff has directed resources toward three priority issues: 1) Free drinking water well testing, 2) Free emergency replacement drinking water in areas where water does not meet drinking water standards, and 3) Community-based water quality grant projects. Initially starting as small-scale pilot projects, the Central Coast Region now benefits from the coordinated regional programs described below to address these important issues. Moving forward, staff will continue to prioritize resources to ensure that these programs are sustainable and continue to be available to underrepresented communities in the Central Coast Region for the long term.

### **Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program**

**Description:** The Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program provides free drinking water well testing for domestic wells and small water systems. The program began in October 2018 and has tested approximately 475 wells to date. The program is implemented in specific counties in the Central Coast Region, in close coordination with local agencies and community partners. The program prioritizes drinking water well testing in underrepresented communities and test results are provided to drinking water well users, along with resources related to safe drinking water and well treatment (in Spanish and English). Program results indicate that approximately 40% of the drinking water wells tested have at least one exceedance of a Primary Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for safe drinking water. The most commonly observed drinking water contaminants are nitrate, chromium VI, and arsenic. Test results are uploaded directly to GeoTracker and data is available to local environmental health agencies and the public. Additionally, wells that do not meet safe drinking water standards are referred to the Regional Bottled Water Program for Central Coast Households Program described below. Currently, staff is coordinating with the Bay Foundation of Morro Bay (Bay Foundation) to execute a new 3-year contract to continue program implementation. The next phases of drinking water well testing are planned for Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara Counties. Interested parties can learn more about the program by calling 1 (844) 613-5152 (English / Español) or by visiting the following websites [Central Coast Well Testing \(www.centralcoastwelltesting.org\)](http://www.centralcoastwelltesting.org) and [Costa Central Analisis De Pozos \(http://www.ccanalisisdepozos.org\)](http://www.ccanalisisdepozos.org).

**Funding:** Long-term funding is secured through the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program – Groundwater Assessment Program (CCAMP-GAP) Fund managed by the Bay Foundation.

### **Regional Bottled Water Program for Central Coast Households**

**Description:** The Regional Bottled Water Program for Central Coast Households provides an immediate source of safe drinking water through a bottled water delivery service program for eligible low-income households whose drinking water wells do not meet safe drinking water standards. The program is implemented by the [Community Water Center](https://www.communitywatercenter.org/)<sup>1</sup> (CWC) using grant funds from the State Water Board's [Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/)<sup>2</sup> (SAFER). CWC identifies potential program participants through the Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program, as well as through active community outreach and engagement. As of January 23, 2023, a total of 226 households in the Central Coast Region are enrolled in the program, primarily in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties, and the program has delivered approximately 217,000 gallons of drinking water. Access to this water fills a critical need for low-income households in the Central Coast Region. CWC has also provided outreach and facilitated the testing of drinking water wells in high priority areas. For more information about the Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program, please contact Shirley Robles at (831) 500-2677 or [shirley.robles@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:shirley.robles@communitywatercenter.org), Brandon Bollinger at (831) 500-2162 or [brandon.bollinger@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:brandon.bollinger@communitywatercenter.org), or Pedro Enriquez at (831) 809-7367 or [pedro.enriquez@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:pedro.enriquez@communitywatercenter.org).

**Funding:** Funding is secured by a \$1.4 million SAFER grant to CWC which ends in February 2024. CWC is working towards extending this grant through June 2026 with additional funding.

### **Central Coast Community-Based Water Quality Grants Program**

**Description:** In April 2022, the Central Coast Water Board allocated \$1.2 million of PG&E settlement funds to the [Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment](https://rosefdn.org/)<sup>3</sup> (Rose Foundation) for the purpose of developing a grant program for large and small projects that: 1) address the human right to water and Central Coast Water Board Resolution R3-2017-0004, 2) address environmental justice issues, 3) provide water quality benefits to underrepresented communities, 4) implement climate change mitigation or climate change adaptation strategies, 5) develop or implement activities to achieve sustainable water supplies, or 6) implement water quality monitoring and assessment projects. The Rose Foundation will convene a third-party Funding Advisory Board to be made up of individuals with knowledge of the Central Coast Region's

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.communitywatercenter.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://rosefdn.org/>

watersheds, groundwater basins, and priority water quality issues to assist with proposal evaluation. Additionally, the Rose Foundation will utilize specific [project ranking and selection criteria](#)<sup>4</sup> during the grant proposal review process. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, but eligible projects not recommended for funding may be placed on a list for potential future consideration. The grant program will also offer capacity assessments and technical assistance mini-grants targeted towards smaller grantees to help organizations build capacity in specific areas. Currently, staff is coordinating with the Bay Foundation and Rose Foundation to finalize funding agreements to support the grants program. The grant program request for project proposal process implementation is anticipated sometime in 2023. For more information about the Community Based Water Quality Grants Program, please visit <https://rosefdn.org/central-coast-community-based-water-quality-grants-program/>.

**Funding:** The Central Coast Water Board allocated \$1.2 million to implement the Community Based Water Quality Grants Program in [Resolution No. R3-2022-0015](#).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [https://rosefdn.org/wp-content/uploads/item12\\_att2.pdf](https://rosefdn.org/wp-content/uploads/item12_att2.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/2022/r3-2022-0015.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2022/r3-2022-0015.pdf)