



Media Release

State Water Board Authorizes Nearly Quarter Billion Dollars to Provide Safe and Affordable Drinking Water

*New Web-based Tool Released to Track Progress
toward Human Right to Water Goals*

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board today authorized spending nearly a quarter billion dollars to help local water systems provide safe, reliable drinking water to communities throughout the state and begin closing the safe drinking water gap for more than one million Californians.

“Communities across the state have struggled for far too long without access to safe drinking water,” said State Water Resources Control Board Chair E. Joaquin Esquivel. “With today’s action, we can begin to close this gap and ensure that the essential human right to safe and affordable water is provided to all Californians.”

[The Board authorized spending \\$130 million](#) this year and for the next 10 years from the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund. Last month, Governor Gavin Newsom signed [Senate Bill 200 \(Monning\)](#), which created the fund to provide a reliable source of ongoing funding for safe drinking water needs using revenue from the state’s [cap-and-trade program](#).



[The Board also voted to authorize spending \\$80 million](#) in one-time appropriations from Proposition 68, the statewide bond measure voters passed in 2018, [and \\$31.5 million in one-time, legislatively sanctioned General Fund dollars](#) to provide emergency funding for projects serving disadvantaged communities.

More than 300 communities and thousands of domestic well users across the state lack safe drinking water because of contamination by arsenic, nitrates and other chemicals. Many other communities served by small drinking water systems are also vulnerable to water quality violations and lack the financial capacity to build, operate and maintain necessary treatment facilities.

Building a Comprehensive Program

The new funding will allow the State Water Board to comprehensively address the full array of issues that prevent water systems from providing safe and affordable drinking water. This includes operating and maintaining modernized treatment systems, building the technical and



managerial capacity of local water systems, and consolidating smaller systems with nearby larger ones.

The funding also will allow small water systems to access additional resources for new treatment facilities and other needed infrastructure. Until now, many small systems could not access these resources because they lacked the funding and technical and managerial expertise to operate this critical public health infrastructure.

During the first year of implementation, most of the funding will be used to award grants and contracts with assistance providers to address immediate drinking water and public health needs in the short term, while beginning to plan and implement long-term solutions in hundreds of communities around the state. Board staff outlined their plan for implementing the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Program at today's Board meeting.

"This funding is the keystone to a comprehensive program the State Water Board has built over the last several years to help local water systems," said Chair Esquivel. "It will allow us to provide immediate safe drinking water supplies and help ensure the long-term sustainability of community water systems."

Draft Human Right to Water Data Tool Released

Also, at today's Board meeting, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment presented a new interactive, web-based map tool for assessing water quality, affordability and accessibility for each of the state's communities and water providers. The tool uses 13 indicators to provide a baseline assessment that will help the State Water Board track progress towards achieving the goals of safe and affordable drinking water that is accessible to all Californians.

The draft report and tool are works in progress, and additional data is needed to provide a comprehensive assessment. During a 60-day public comment period, OEHHA and the State Water Board will conduct webinars and workshops to solicit public input that will be used to finalize the report and tool by the end of the year.

- Read the draft report, [*Achieving the Human Right to Water in California, An Assessment of the State's Community Water Systems.*](#)
- View the [*Draft Human Right to Water Data Tool.*](#)

In 2012, California enacted Human Right to Water legislation ([*AB 685*](#)) recognizing that "every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes." The State Water Board adopted a resolution identifying that right as a top priority and core value.

Since 2014, the board has:

- Brought 250 systems that were failing to deliver safe drinking water back into compliance.

- Taken actions that led to the consolidation of 100 failing - or likely to fail - water systems.
- Helped more than 200 small disadvantaged communities secure funding for project planning and construction.
- Provided over \$1.4 billion in low-interest loans and grants, benefitting approximately 7.2 million people in communities large and small, rich and poor, urban and rural.

The State Water Board maintains a list and map of these communities on its [Human Right to Water portal](#). For more information on this ongoing effort, [a frequently asked questions document poses important questions and answers](#).

The Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund is part of [California Climate Investments](#), a statewide initiative that puts billions of cap-and-trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.

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