



Media Release

Adoption of Policy Will Set Priorities and Guide Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund For Next Decade

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board today [adopted a policy](#) that will serve as a template for how the Board will identify communities and areas of the state at risk of not having adequate safe drinking water and how investment priorities will be established over a 10-year funding program.

The SAFER ([Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience](#)) program is a set of tools, funding sources and regulatory authorities designed to ensure reliable and safe drinking water is delivered to those most in need.

This new policy will direct the Board's efforts to administer the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund to address long-standing challenges confronting an estimated one million people without safe drinking water throughout the state.

"Ensuring access to clean and safe drinking water for all Californians is a generational challenge that our state has risen to accept," said E. Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the State Water Board. "The adoption of this policy is a key milestone in this first year of the Board's comprehensive SAFER program, and furthers Gov.Gavin Newsom's vision of a water resilient California for all. This policy, and the expenditure plan that will accompany it, are necessarily iterative as we transparently implement the Safe and Affordable Fund and SAFER program in the months and years ahead."

While the policy is largely procedural in nature, it will serve as a guide for this ambitious program. The policy provides an overall funding strategy and will do several things: define key eligibilities, metrics and terms; describe how proposed remedies will be identified and prioritized; and establish a petition process for disadvantaged communities seeking consolidation with another – often larger and more economically viable – public water system.

According to the newly adopted policy, solutions for non-compliant and at-risk public water systems will be prioritized based on immediate health risk, untreated or at-risk water sources, and chronic compliance or water shortage issues.

Within the next several months, the Water Board will conduct public workshops and quickly adopt a Fund Expenditure Plan that identifies funding projects and priorities for



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the upcoming fiscal year. The plan is intended to identify eligible projects and activities that provide temporary solutions such as providing bottled water or water filling stations or more permanent solutions such as new treatment facilities or consolidation with another water system.

In July 2019, Gov. Gavin Newsom [signed SB 200 into law](#), a long-term funding solution aimed at bringing safe and affordable drinking water to disadvantaged communities. In the [first year](#) of the program, \$100 million will come from the state's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and \$30 million from the General Fund. For the remainder of the decade, up to \$130 million each year will be directed to the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, using revenue from the state's [cap-and-trade program](#) and the General Fund.

In December, the State Water Board selected a [19-member Advisory Group](#) composed of community members and stakeholder groups to help identify needs and recommend spending priorities during the life of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund.

For more details on the policy, see the State Water Board's [fact sheet](#).