

SAFER Drinking Water Advisory Group Meeting #3

Meeting Notes | September 9, 2022

Overview

The Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Advisory Group (AG) participated in a full day meeting that included discussions on the draft FY 2022-23 Fund Expenditure Plan (FEP), strategy for domestic wells and state small water systems, and point-of-use/point-of-entry (POU/POE) report. Staff shared written updates on the State Auditor's report related to the State Water Board's drinking water assistance efforts, 2022 legislation, and upcoming SAFER events and deadlines. In a closed session, a conflict-of-interest training was provided for the AG.

Draft Fund Expenditure Plan Discussion

FEP Priorities

- Agreement on involving communities in the decision-making process for FEP priorities.
- Recommendation to focus on community engagement as well as coordination and communication between technical assistance providers and communities.
- Concerns with the complex funding processes, various potential solutions, and lack of information for communities to access funding.
- Concerns with funding priorities related to water quality standard of systems that could fall out of compliance with constituents of emerging concerns such as PFAs and HexChrom.
- Recommendation to focus on permanent solutions by using the State Water Board's administrator authority to facilitate permanent solutions and leverage existing programs for expanding available resources.
- Concerns with the timeliness of implementing solutions. Consensus on the importance of prioritizing and accelerating interim solutions to permanent solutions.
- Recommendation to utilize counties and untapped local organizations and networks to enhance engagement of timely domestic well solutions.
- Recommendation to equitably allocate funds to reach unincorporated rural areas and low-income communities with unsafe water, at-risk systems, and private wells.
- Overall agreement to increase the number of administrators and focus on consolidations.
- Concerns with funds carried over to another year, this implies the program has not done enough work to spend the money.
- Concerns regarding the time it takes technical assistance (TA) providers to identify O&M sustainable solutions.

FEP Allocation per Project Types

- Concerns regarding the coordination with counties and the lack of information on which county has applied for funding.
- Agreement to identify a strategy with counties to play a more active role, use their expertise and connections, and advance solutions.
- Recommendation to keep technical assistance providers accountable to make sure they are helping communities and completing the requested tasks.
- Recommendation to allocate more funds for interim solutions to address emergency response to water quality issues and allocate less to TA providers.

Strategy for Domestic Wells and State Small Water Systems

Approaches for Domestic Wells and State Small Water Systems

- Concerns regarding the lack of local presence throughout the state in underserved regions where it is challenging to find TA providers and assistance for state smalls and domestic wells.
- Concerns regarding the lack of data of state small water systems and domestic wells.
- Concerns regarding the lack of regulation for counties to test domestic wells. Recommendation to invest in coordination with the counties who have jurisdiction to collect data on domestic wells and state smalls.
- Recommendation to educate people about water problems in their communities.

Other Approaches for Consideration

- Recommendation to collaborate with local communities and counties to identify domestic wells and state smalls water systems water needs and involve them in the decision-making process.
- Overall agreement to create an outreach strategy to meet at sites with communities and local/state representatives.
- Recommendation to create awareness among the counties about funding availability and promotion of long-term solutions for safe and affordable drinking water.
- Concerns over drought conditions and risk of inequitable water distribution diverted for agriculture purposes creating burdens on disadvantaged communities.
- Recommendation to hire field staff to coordinate outreach efforts and use partnerships to complement the outreach.
- Recommendation to speed up the implementation of long-term solutions for communities living with unsafe drinking water for decades.

POU/POE Report

Strategies for outreach, education efforts, and recruitment

- Recommendation to monitor POU/POE units and assist homeowners in maintaining POU/POE units.
- Recommendation to prioritize community outreach to educate POU/POE recipients on how to maintain and change filters.
- Recommendation to have a permanent source of technical assistance for homeowners with POU/POE units.

Pilot studies recommendations

- Concerns regarding new contaminants, multiple contaminants and/or high levels of a contaminant preventing water cleanup with a POU/POE treatment.
- Recommendation to prioritize technical assistance and consolidations over POU/POE treatment to ensure long term solutions.
- Concerns regarding remote communities where consolidations or other permanent solutions are not available while POU/POE treatment become a permanent solution.
- Concerns regarding POU/POE installed in tenant-occupied homes and questions about how landlords will be kept accountable for providing POU/POE treatment and maintenance.
- Questions about whether POU/POE treatment is considered a permanent solution, and whether CV SALTS management zones are also installing POU/POE unit in addition to bottled water.

Equity tracking metrics priorities

- Concerns regarding the availability of SAFER funding for installation of POU/POE treatment, but not enough funding for operations & maintenance.

- Concerns regarding the potential lack of mobility of elderly people or people with disabilities to maintain their POU/POE unit. Consensus for POU/POE treatment as a cost-effective solution to provide safe and affordable drinking water.

Public Comments

- Need to see more collaboration with counties, CV SALTS management zones, and groundwater sustainability agencies to address private domestic wells and state small water systems challenges or implement mitigation programs.
- Need to see more outreach and water quality testing for domestic wells and state smalls.
- Recommendation to provide domestic well households with more resources and support, and excited to have direct operations and maintenance assistance for struggling communities.
- The municipal wells for Yolo County seemed like it represented a time period before the Woodland Davis Clean Water Project came online. What time period do the results represent on the nitrate chart?
- There are lessons learned from previous outreach efforts with Self-Help Enterprises and WIC (Women Infant and Children) to test wells and provide resources. Are you coordinating the development of your outreach plan with the Management Zones?
- What is happening to the water wells near oil and gas wells that are leaking methane? Should this groundwater be tested for volatile organic compounds especially in Arvin near Grimmway Academy?

AG Member Announcements

- Lake Francis Mutual Water Company – Worked with the community and completed an application for an engineering plan to obtain safe water.
- Community of San Gerardo – State Water Boards funded a technical assistance provider to support the community.
- Community of Lanare – Possible consolidation annexation to connect domestic wells with a black water septic system.
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation – State Water Board’s Division of Financial Assistance worked with about 50 different communities to assist with Technical Assistance.
- Fresno Irrigation District (FID) – a member agency of the North Kings Groundwater Sustainable Act (GSA) collaborated with the California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) to support the completion of the Savory Groundwater Recharge Basin (Basin) within the North Kings GSA boundary to mitigate the groundwater pumping in the area. The Basin is upgradient of many private domestic wells. This is a good example of leveraging resources in a collaborative manner to develop best solutions for the community, irrigation district, and the GSA. Groundwater sustainability plans were resubmitted to the state for the critically over drafted basins with deficiencies including domestic wells or shallow mitigation program.
- Coachella Valley Regionalization Project– Completed agreement for drinking water program to install more POU treatment systems and consolidations that covers about 85% of the population. Looking to complete engineering, CEQA in the next year, and address arsenic and fluoride.
- Community of Monson - Fifth year of consolidation project between Monson and Sultana communities. The State Water Board provided financial support for the consolidation. The pipeline connection is scheduled to be completed on September 15, 2022.
- Mendocino County – Upcoming community discussion regarding State Water Board funding opportunities for water systems.

Advisory Group Attendance (P= present, A= absent)

Horacio Amezquita: P

Sergio Carranza: P

Kassy Chauhan: P

Victor Chavarin Jr: A

Sandra Chavez: P

Esther Espinoza: P

Cástulo Estrada: P

Jennifer Hazard: P

Jianmin Huang: P

Don James: A

Rami Kahlon: P

Maria Luisa Muñoz: P

Michael S. Prado Sr.: P

Jonathan Rash: P

Michael Rincon: P

Emily Rooney: P

Isabel Solorio: P

James Sullivan: P

Ethel See Winchell: P

State Water Board Attendance

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

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

Office of Public Participation: Marina Perez, Haydee Yonamine, Caroline Pradeau Fonseca, Lourdes Salinas

Office of Chief Counsel: Douglas Bojack, Lauren Marshall