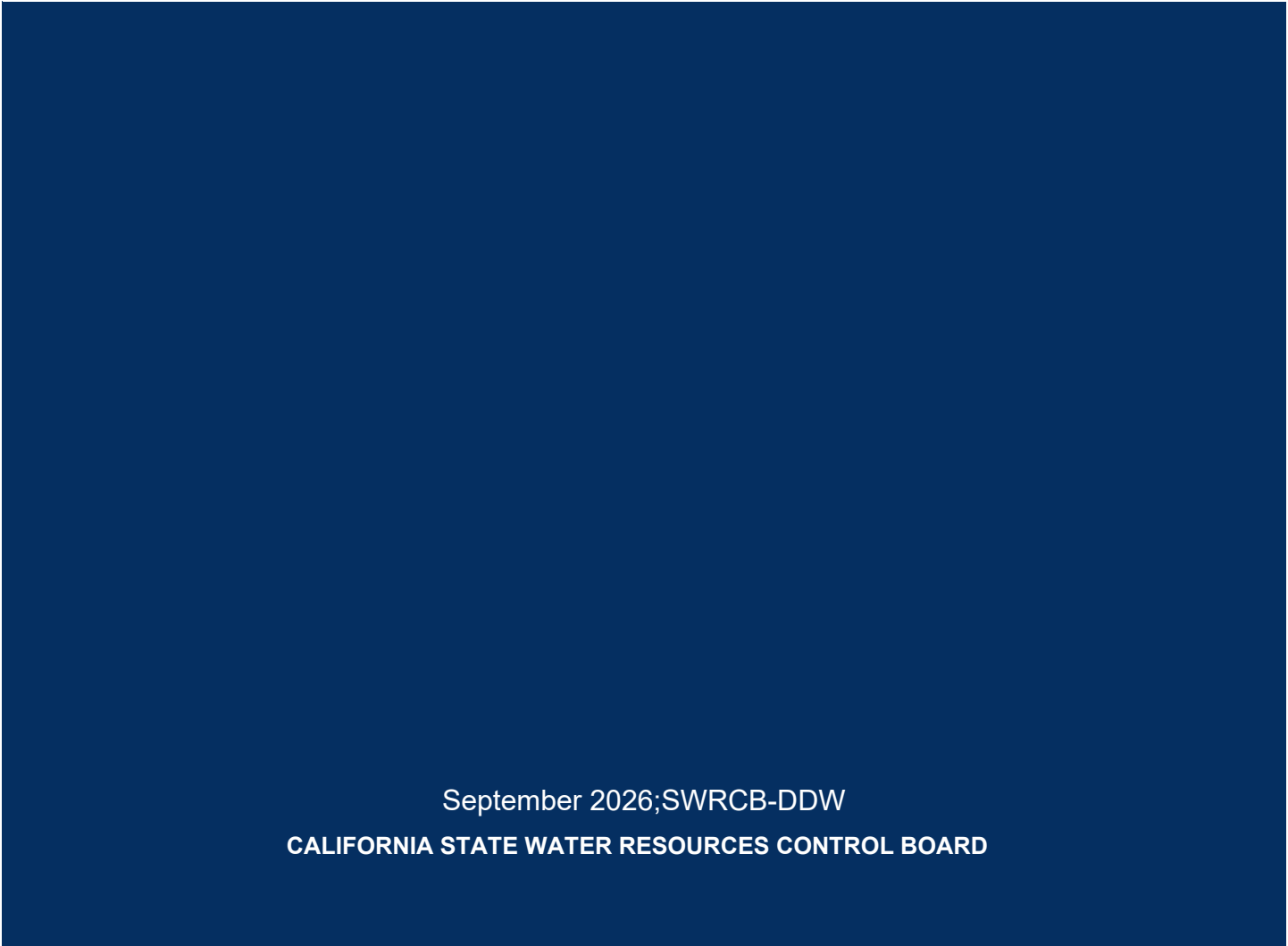




CALIFORNIA CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

2023 – 2025 Report to the Governor



September 2026;SWRCB-DDW

CALIFORNIA STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction & Background	3
Definitions	3
SAFE Drinking Water Act and Funding Sources.....	3
2022 Revised Capacity Development Strategy	4
Strategy Goals.....	4
TMF Capacity Development Strategic Elements	4
Capacity Development Strategy Revisions	5
Program Activities	6
Water System Compliance Evaluation	6
SAFER Program.....	10
Drinking Water Needs Assessment.....	10
Failing Public Water Systems.....	13
At-Risk Water Systems	17
Cost Assessment	20
Affordability Assessment.....	22
Technical Assistance.....	26
Planning and Construction Funding Assistance...	29
Consolidations.....	30
Administrators	32
Ongoing needs	35
Regulatory Development Needs	35
Data & Data Systems Improvement	36
Coordination Amongst State and Federal Agencies.....	36
Local Barriers	36

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the triennial Report to the Governor prepared by the California Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) drinking water capacity development program as required by the provisions of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). This report spans the calendar years 2023 through 2025. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has delegated primacy to the State Water Board for enforcement of the provisions of the federal SDWA. Within the State Water Board, the Division of Drinking Water (DDW) oversees enforcement of drinking water standards and requirements of public water systems in California under the SDWA.

To assist public water systems in meeting the standards of the SDWA, EPA provides funds to the State Water Board through the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) program, which enables the State Water Board to administer low-interest loans, principal forgiveness, and grants to public water systems for infrastructure improvement projects.

Within the SRF program, EPA provides set-aside funds for the capacity development program, which seeks to improve the viability of public water systems by improving their technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity.¹ Capacity can be defined as those TMF elements that affect the ability of public water systems to operate in compliance with the federal SDWA on a sustained basis.

This report is intended to document the efficacy of California's capacity development strategy and the progress made toward improving the TMF capacity of public water systems from 2023-2025. In 2022, EPA approved California's revised Capacity Development Strategy.² Two key drivers shaped this revision: the recognition of the Human Right to Water (HR2W) under California Water Code Section 106.3 in 2012 and the subsequent establishment of Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund (SADWF) under Senate Bill 200 (SB 200)³ in 2019; and the 2018 America's Water Infrastructure Act amendment to the SDWA, which required state Capacity Development Strategies to describe how states will encourage and assist public water systems in developing asset management plans. The overall goal of the Strategy is to increase the ability of public water system operators, managers, and decision-makers to consistently operate, maintain, and manage their public water systems in a manner that protects public health. The Strategy is organized around eight strategic elements — spanning the permitting of new systems, identification and prioritization of systems in need, direct capacity building, third-party technical assistance, funding oversight, asset

¹ [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program and Complementary Programs Intended Use Plan , fiscal year 2026-27:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/services/funding/documents/srf/2026/2026-27-dwsrf-iup.pdf)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/services/funding/documents/srf/2026/2026-27-dwsrf-iup.pdf

² [California Capacity Development Strategy for Public Water Systems:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/docs/2022/2022-capdev-strategy-v2.pdf)https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/docs/2022/2022-capdev-strategy-v2.pdf

³ [SB-200 Drinking water:](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB200&utm)
https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB200&utm

management, data reporting, and measurement of program success. In addition, Senate Bill 1188 (SB 1188)⁴, enacted in 2024, requires the State Water Board to establish minimum TMF capacity standards for community water systems (CWSs) serving fewer than 10,000 people or 3,300 service connections and nontransient noncommunity (NTNC) water systems that serve K–12 schools, which will strengthen the state’s ability to proactively identify and assist systems at risk of long-term capacity challenges. As the State Water Board looks to the next three years, challenges remain, but the components of the capacity development program are in place to provide assistance to public water systems where needed.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

DEFINITIONS

All public water systems should have the technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity to plan for, achieve, and maintain long term compliance with drinking water standards, thereby ensuring the quality and adequacy of the water supply. These three areas of capacity are interrelated:

Technical Capacity: The ability of a public water system to effectively treat and deliver safe drinking water with appropriately certified operators that meet state and federal water quality standards.

Managerial Capacity: A public water system’s ability to conduct its affairs in a manner enabling it to achieve and maintain compliance with the California SDWA requirements while maintaining best practices in accountability and interactions with customers and regulatory agencies.

Financial Capacity: A public water system’s ability to generate sufficient revenue for current and future budget needs, maintain credit worthiness, and manage funds through budgeting, accounting and other methods of fiscal control.

SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT AND FUNDING SOURCES

Under the provisions of United States Codes, Section 1420(c)(3) of the federal SDWA, DDW is required to prepare a report to the Governor every three years on its capacity development program. These reports are to be made available to the public and are intended to document the efficacy of California’s capacity development strategy and the progress made toward improving the technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity of public water systems. This report spans the calendar years 2023 through 2025.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has delegated primacy to the State Water Board for enforcement of the provisions of the federal SDWA. The State Water Board has subdelegated primacy for the oversight of a subset of small water systems to 25 counties. These Local Primacy Agencies (LPAs) are local environmental health

⁴ [Senate Bill No. 1188: Drinking water: technical, managerial, and financial standards:](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB1188&utm)
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB1188&utm

agencies that regulate small community public water systems with less than 200 service connections, or any transient noncommunity or non-transient noncommunity water systems within their county. However, the State Water Board retains regulatory oversight of the 25 counties that chose to have an LPA drinking water program under a Local Primacy Delegation Agreement.

To assist public water systems in meeting the standards of the federal SDWA, EPA provides funds from the SRF to the State Water Board to administer low-interest loans, principal forgiveness and grants to public water systems for infrastructure improvement projects. In addition, EPA allows states to set aside a portion of those funds for capacity development and technical assistance. These two set-aside funding sources are combined in this report as the capacity development program. In addition, the California Legislature established the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water (SADW) Fund under SB 200 in 2019 to support operational needs such as interim water supply, emergency assistance, technical assistance, system administrators, and operations and maintenance costs.

2022 REVISED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

California's initial Capacity Development Strategy was adopted in 2000.⁵ The Capacity Development Strategy has developed and evolved over time since then. In 2022, EPA approved the State Water Board's revised Capacity Development Strategy.⁶ This approval was required by the federal SDWA to enable California to access the federal matching funds available through the SRF.

STRATEGY GOALS

Achieving the Human Right to Water: All water systems can provide consistently safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes to their customers.

- To protect public health by ensuring consistent compliance with drinking water standards.
- To enhance performance beyond compliance through measures that encourage efficiency, effectiveness, and high level of service.
- To promote continuous improvement through monitoring, assessment, and strategic planning.

TMF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The revised Capacity Development Strategy's core elements:

⁵ [2000 Capacity Development Strategy:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/cd_strategy.pdf)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/cd_strategy.pdf

⁶ [2022 California Capacity Development Strategy for Public Water Systems:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/docs/2022/2022-capdev-strategy-v2.pdf)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/docs/2022/2022-capdev-strategy-v2.pdf

- 1) Ensuring new public water systems have TMF capacity.
- 2) Identification and prioritization of existing systems in need of improved TMF capacity.
- 3) Supporting direct capacity building.
- 4) Supporting capacity building work of third-party organizations.
- 5) Ensuring TMF capacity of State funding and financing recipients.
- 6) Promoting asset management.
- 7) Building capacity through complete and accurate data gathering and reporting.
- 8) Measuring TMF capacity building success.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REVISIONS

Two key drivers that led to the revised Capacity Development Strategy:

1. After California adopted its Capacity Development Strategy in 2000, the State legislature established the Human Right to Water (HR2W) in statute (2012). This is now established in California Water Code Section 106.3, which recognizes that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.” To advance the goals of the HR2W, California passed SB 200 in 2019, which enabled the State Water Board to establish the SADWF. SB 200 established a set of tools, funding sources, and regulatory authorities that the State Water Board harnesses to help struggling public water systems build capacity to sustainably and affordably provide safe drinking water.
2. In 2018, America’s Water infrastructure Act amended the SDWA to require state Capacity Development Strategies to include:

A description of how the state will, as appropriate (i) encourage development by public water systems of asset management plans that include best practices for asset management; and (ii) assist, including through the provision of technical assistance, public water systems in training operators or other relevant and appropriate persons in implementing such asset management plans.

In 2022, the State Water Board hosted two public workshops to seek feedback and recommendations on the revised Capacity Development Strategy. Stakeholders helped identify barriers to capacity development and shaped the Strategy’s core Elements. Many existing Elements have been revised to incorporate the activities implemented through the SAFER Program⁷ (see Element 2, “Identification & Prioritization of Existing Systems in Need of Improved TMF Capacity” and Element 3, “Supporting Direct Capacity Building” of the Strategy).

The State Water Board solicited public feedback on how to best incorporate asset management into the revised Strategy through the development of Element 6 of the

⁷ [SAFER Program:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/)
<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/>

Strategy. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to suggest data and metrics that could be collected in the future to better help the State identify asset management resource needs and better track the successful implementation of asset management strategies by public water systems over time.

The final updated Capacity Development Strategies and accompanying workshop materials are available on the State Water Board's Capacity Development webpage.⁸

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

WATER SYSTEM COMPLIANCE EVALUATION

The State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water (DDW) is the primacy agency responsible for the administration and enforcement of the SDWA requirements in California. The State Water Board has adopted statutes and regulations to implement the requirements of the SDWA. The State Water Boards' regulatory responsibility over public water systems includes (1) issuance of operating permits, (2) conducting inspections and sanitary surveys, (3) monitoring for compliance with regulations and document violations, and (4) taking enforcement action to compel compliance when violations are identified.

The enforcement directives prescribe what must be done for the public water system to return to compliance (RTC). The criteria for when RTC is achieved may depend on the applicable rule, type of violation, and contaminant. For example, for an Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violation involving a chemical with chronic health effects, RTC is achieved when the public water system stops providing water that exceeds the MCL, issues the required public notification, and submits the information required in the enforcement action, such as a corrective action plan. Public water systems may achieve compliance by inactivating the source that exceeds the MCL, providing an alternate source of water that meets drinking water standards, or implementing reliable treatment to ensure the treated source of supply complies with the MCL. Through the tracking of violations and subsequent enforcement actions, DDW identifies water systems that need further assistance, as described in sections below.

Table 1 summarizes the number of federal drinking water violations and percentage of the violations that were addressed through enforcement actions by regulatory category. Violation types included MCL, TT (Treatment Technique), or M&R (Monitoring & Reporting). Enforcement actions may include formal actions, such as notices of violation, citations and compliance orders, as well as informal actions used to support corrective measures and return to compliance.

⁸ [California State Water Resources Control Board, Capacity Development Webpage:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/TMF.html)
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/TMF.html

Table 1: Number of Federal MCL/TT/MR Violations and Percentage Addressed with Enforcement Action (2023-2025)⁹

Category	2023	2024	2025
Inorganic Contaminants (IOC)	756 (99%)	605 (100%)	531 (98%)
Synthetic Organic Contaminants (SOC)	154 (100%)	19 (95%)	23 (96%)
Volatile Organic Contaminants (VOC)	42 (100%)	5 (100%)	9 (89%)
Radionuclide Contaminants (RAD)	91 (93%)	105 (100%)	113 (100%)
Revised Total Coliform Rule (rTCR)	234 (95%)	367(97%)	433 (99%)
Disinfection By-Products Rule (DBPR)	140 (100%)	83 (96%)	79 (100%)
Surface Water Treatment Rules (SWTR)	94 (99%)	75 (89%)	80 (100%)
Groundwater Rule (GWR)	14 (100%)	27 (100%)	24 (100%)
Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) (USEPA Primacy)	0 (NA) ¹⁰	1,672 (0%) ¹¹	1477 (0%) ¹²
Lead and Copper Rule (DDW Primacy)	184 (60%)	131 (66%)	137 (85%)
Public Notification Rule (PN)	24 (100%)	23 (100%)	18 (56%)
Consumer Confidence Report Rule (CCR)	91 (100%)	118 (99%)	146 (100%)
Variances and Exemptions (V/E)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	10 (100%)

Table 2 and Table 3 below summarize the number of public water systems that incurred MCL, TT, or M&R violations of each rule for federal drinking water standards for the year 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Table 2: Count of Unique Public Water Systems with Federal MCL/TT Violations in 2023-2025¹³

Drinking Water Rule	2023	2024	2025
Inorganic Contaminants (IOC)	189	160	147
Synthetic Organics (SOC)	1	3	2
Volatile Organics (VOC)	0	0	0
Radionuclides (RAD)	22	20	27
Total Coliform Rules (RTCR)	38	43	38
Disinfection Byproducts Rules (DBPR)	33	25	20
Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR)	34	31	37
Groundwater Treatment Rule (GWR)	0	2	5
Lead and Copper Rule (LCR)	2	766 ¹⁴	697 ^{15 14}
Public Notifications (PN)	0	0	0
Consumer Confidence Rule (CCR)	0	0	0
Variance/exemptions (V/E)	0	0	0

⁹ Individual water systems can incur more than one violation in each category.

¹⁰ No LCR-USEPA violations are shown for 2023 because the requirements began in October 2024, with the LSL inventory submission deadline of October 16, 2024. Therefore, violations began in 2024.

¹¹ For 2024, LCR violations increased because USEPA added a new regulation, the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR). The LCRR requires CWSs and NTNCs to conduct a Lead Service Line Inventory of water service lines and determine the material of those lines and fittings. All CWSs and NTNCs must develop and submit to DDW an initial inventory, with a deadline of October 16, 2024. Water systems that missed the October 2024 deadline received a treatment technique (TT) violation and a reporting (RPT) violation and were required to notify customers. Related violations were entered into SDWIS by DDW and are to receive future enforcement from USEPA if warranted.

¹² In 2025, LCR violations decreased as out-of-compliance public water systems conduct their lead service line inventory. Additional violations were added in 2025 for water systems that failed to notify consumers. Related violations were entered into SDWIS by DDW and are to receive future enforcement from USEPA if warranted.

¹³ Individual water systems can incur more than one violation in each category.

¹⁴ For 2024, LCR violations increased because USEPA added a new regulation, the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR). The LCRR requires CWSs and NTNCs to conduct a Lead Service Line Inventory of water service lines and determine the material of those lines and fittings. All CWSs and NTNCs must develop and submit to DDW an initial inventory, with a deadline of October 16, 2024. Water systems that missed the October 2024 deadline received a treatment technique (TT) violation and a reporting (RPT) violation and were required to notify customers.

¹⁵ In 2025, LCR violations decreased compared to 2024 count as out-of-compliance public water systems conduct their lead service line inventory. Additional violations were added in 2025 for water systems that failed to notify consumers

Table 3: Count of Unique Public Water Systems with Federal M&R Violations in 2023-2025

Drinking Water Rule	2023	2024	2025
Inorganic Contaminants (IOC)	195	103	89
Synthetic Organics (SOC)	7	11	8
Volatile Organics (VOC)	2	5	6
Radionuclides (RAD)	5	9	8
Total Coliform Rules (RTCR)	153	244	292
Disinfection Byproducts Rules (DBPR)	34	26	23
Surface Water Treatment Rule (SWTR)	5	11	15
Groundwater Treatment Rule (GWR)	12	17	16
Lead and Copper Rule (LCR)	163	882 ¹⁶	863 ¹⁷
Public Notifications (PN)	16	15	16
Consumer Confidence Rule (CCR)	63	85	99
Variance/exemptions (V/E)	5	3	6

Table 4 & Table 5 show the number of public water systems that have returned to compliance in 2023, 2024, and 2025 following a federal MCL/TT and M&R violations. The violations that are returned to compliance in each year may be identified in previous years.

¹⁶ The increase reflects expanded compliance outcomes under the Lead and Copper Rule, including required first-draw tap sampling for lead and copper, laboratory analysis, calculation of the 90th percentile concentrations, and reporting results to DDW and affected consumers. The Lead Service Line Inventory (LSLI) requirement under the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions also contributed significantly, as all CWS and NTNC systems were required to complete and submit an inventory of lead service lines and related components by October 2024. Systems that did not complete required sampling, analytical determinations, LSLI development, or mandated data submissions within the compliance period received a treatment technique (TT) violation and a reporting (RPT) violation and were required to notify customers.

¹⁷ In 2025, LCR violations decreased compared to 2024 counts, as out-of-compliance public water systems conducted their lead service line inventory. Additional violations were added in 2025 for water systems that failed to notify consumers

Table 4: Total Number of PWSs That Returned to Compliance for MCL/TT Violations

Year	MCL/TT Violations
2023	59
2024	76
2025	67

Table 5: Total Number of PWSs That Returned to Compliance for M&R Violations

Year	M&R Violations
2023	280
2024	357
2025	343

SAFER PROGRAM

The HR2W recognizes that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking and sanitary purposes.” In 2019, to advance the goals of the HR2W, California passed SB 200, which enabled the State Water Board to create the SAFER program. SB 200 established a set of tools, funding sources, and regulatory authorities that the State Water Board harnesses through the SAFER program to help struggling water systems sustainably and affordably provide safe drinking water. The SAFER program is driven by collective responsibility: water systems, non-profit organizations, governments, a community advisory group, and other interested parties work together to develop and implement solutions.

As required by SB 200, the State Water Board conducts annual Drinking Water Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) to support the SAFER program by identifying and prioritizing drinking water challenges and informing actions needed to advance the Human Right to Water.

DRINKING WATER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Drinking Water Needs Assessment is a comprehensive, data-driven analysis conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board through the SAFER program to identify and prioritize drinking water challenges across California. The assessment provides the foundational information needed to guide state investments, technical assistance, regulatory efforts, and community engagement to advance the Human Right to Water. The results of the annual Needs Assessment are utilized by the State Water

Board and the SAFER Advisory Group¹⁸ to inform the prioritization of available state funding and technical assistance within the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund (SADWF) Fund Expenditure Plan (FEP)¹⁹. The State Water Board typically hosts a series of workshops throughout the year to inform the FEP.

The Needs Assessment enables the State Water Board to identify public water systems in California that are failing or at risk of failing to provide safe and affordable drinking water, with a particular focus on CWSs and non-community water systems (NCWSs) serving schools and daycares (Figure 1). Specifically, the assessment:

- 1) Identifies Failing public water systems;
- 2) Identify public water systems at risk of failing, and identify small water systems and domestic wells in areas of high risk.
- 3) Estimates how much it may cost to achieve the Human Right to Water for Failing and At-Risk water systems;
- 4) Estimates the potential five-year funding gap between estimated funding needs and state funding availability; and
- 5) Identifies disadvantaged communities that may be facing affordability challenges, which may limit their ability to address existing and future drinking water challenges.

The State Water Board fully documents the development and implementation of the Needs Assessment, all of which are detailed in a publicly available white papers, reports, webinar recording, etc. on the State Water Board's Needs Assessment website.²⁰ In addition to the annual reports, a new set of dashboards is now available, providing expanded and more frequent reporting on Failing and Risk Assessment, as well as Affordability Assessment. These dashboards build upon and replace many of the static infographics previously included in the Drinking Water Needs Assessment Report and will ultimately replace the previous SAFER Dashboard.²¹

¹⁸ [SAFER Advisory Group | California State Water Resources Control Board](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/advisory_group.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/advisory_group.html

¹⁹ [Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience | California State Water Resources Control Board](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/sustainable_water_solutions/safer.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/sustainable_water_solutions/safer.html

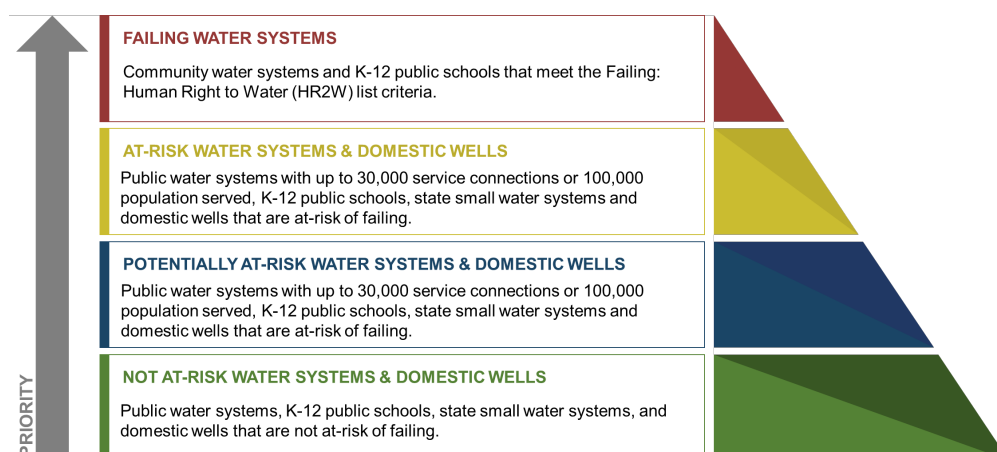
²⁰ [Drinking Water Needs Assessment](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/needs)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/needs

²¹ [SAFER Dashboard of Failing and At-Risk Public Water Systems](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/2022.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/2022.html

Figure 1: SAFER Program Priority Systems



The methodologies used in the Drinking Water Needs Assessment were developed and continue to be refined through a robust process of stakeholder engagement, interagency coordination, and technical evaluation. Building on foundational work established in 2019–2020, the State Water Board has hosted more than 28 public workshops since 2019 to solicit feedback, improve transparency, and strengthen the analytical approaches used to evaluate drinking water challenges across California.

In 2023, workshops focused on several key components of the Needs Assessment, including Failing Systems, Risk Assessment methodologies for public water systems and state small water systems, Affordability, and Cost Assessment, with particular emphasis on rebuilding the cost model. No methodology workshops were conducted in 2024 or 2025 (Figure 2); however, continued internal coordination and data refinement efforts informed several key 2025 enhancements.

The 2025 methodology enhancements focused on improving data quality, coverage, and accuracy. Updates included using machine-readable Drought and Conservation Reports for the Bottled or Hauled Water Reliance Indicator, expanding groundwater analysis by estimating missing well locations to better assess overdraft risk, and improving Median Household Income (MHI) calculations through additional geographic levels and census data years. Together, these improvements strengthen the reliability of the Needs Assessment and support informed funding prioritization and technical assistance decisions.

Figure 2: Past Workshops on Needs Assessment Methodologies

NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Failing List		1	1	1	2	0	0
Risk Assessment: Public Water Systems	1	3	1	2	3	0	0
Risk Assessment: State Small Water Systems & Domestic Wells	1	4	2	2	3	0	0
Cost Assessment	3	2	2	3	5	0	0
Affordability Assessment		2	1	5	3	0	0

FAILING PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

The State Water Board assesses water systems that fail to meet the goals of the HR2W and maintains a list and map of these systems on its website. Systems that are on the Failing list are those that are out of compliance or consistently fail to meet drinking water standards. Systems that are assessed include CWSs NCWSs that serve schools and daycares. The Failing criteria are documented and updated when appropriate on the State Water Board's HR2W list webpage.²² The State Water Board works with stakeholders to routinely review the Failing criteria and updates it when appropriate. The Failing criteria were expanded in March 2021 to better align with statutory definitions of what it means for a water system to “consistently fail” to meet drinking water standards.²³ The Failing criteria was expanded again in March 2024 to include new source capacity and water outage related violations, see Table 6.

Table 6:Failing Criteria for Public Water Systems

Criteria	Jan. 2017 – April 2021	April 2021 – April 2024	After April 2024
Primary MCL Violation: a health-based contaminant exceeds an MCL with an open Enforcement Action	Yes	Yes	Yes
Secondary MCL Violation: Taste, odor, color, etc. exceeds an MCL with an open Enforcement Action	Yes	Yes	Yes
E. coli Violation: Detection of, or failure to test for bacteria, and	No	Yes	Yes

²² [State Water Board Failing: Human Right to Water Webpage](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/)
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/

²³ California Health and Safety Code Section 116275(c)

Criteria	Jan. 2017 – April 2021	April 2021 – April 2024	After April 2024
there is an open Enforcement Action			
Treatment Technique Violations: A system fails to follow required treatment technique violations and has: - One violation with an open enforcement action; or - Three or more Treatment Technique violations within the last three years.	Partially	Expanded	Yes
Monitoring and Reporting Violations: A system has three or more occurrences of missed or late testing/reporting within the last three years and at least one occurrence where and enforcement action has been open for 15 months or longer.	No	Yes	Yes
Source Capacity Violations: A system is unable to deliver water, has insufficient water pressure, and there is an open enforcement action	No	No	Yes

The results of the historical and the current list of Failing water systems are accessible online through the State Water Board's Failing Water System Dashboards²⁴ (Figure 3) &(Figure 4). The Dashboards are updated quarterly. The Failing Water Systems Dashboard presents data on the water systems that are currently failing (Figure 3). The Historical Failing Dashboard (Figure 4) presents data on all water systems that have appeared on the Failing list since 2017, including those that have returned to compliance and been removed from the list. It includes summary figures illustrating the number of water systems on the Failing list for each day, as well as the number of systems added to and removed from the list on a quarterly basis since 2017.

²⁴ [Failing Water Systems Dashboard:](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoibkNDM2YjEtOGI3OS00MjVILWI5ZTYtNjFjOTI3MDUwOGI2IiwidCI6ImZIMTg2YT11LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9)

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoibkNDM2YjEtOGI3OS00MjVILWI5ZTYtNjFjOTI3MDUwOGI2IiwidCI6ImZIMTg2YT11LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9>

Figure 3: Failing Water Systems Dashboard²⁵

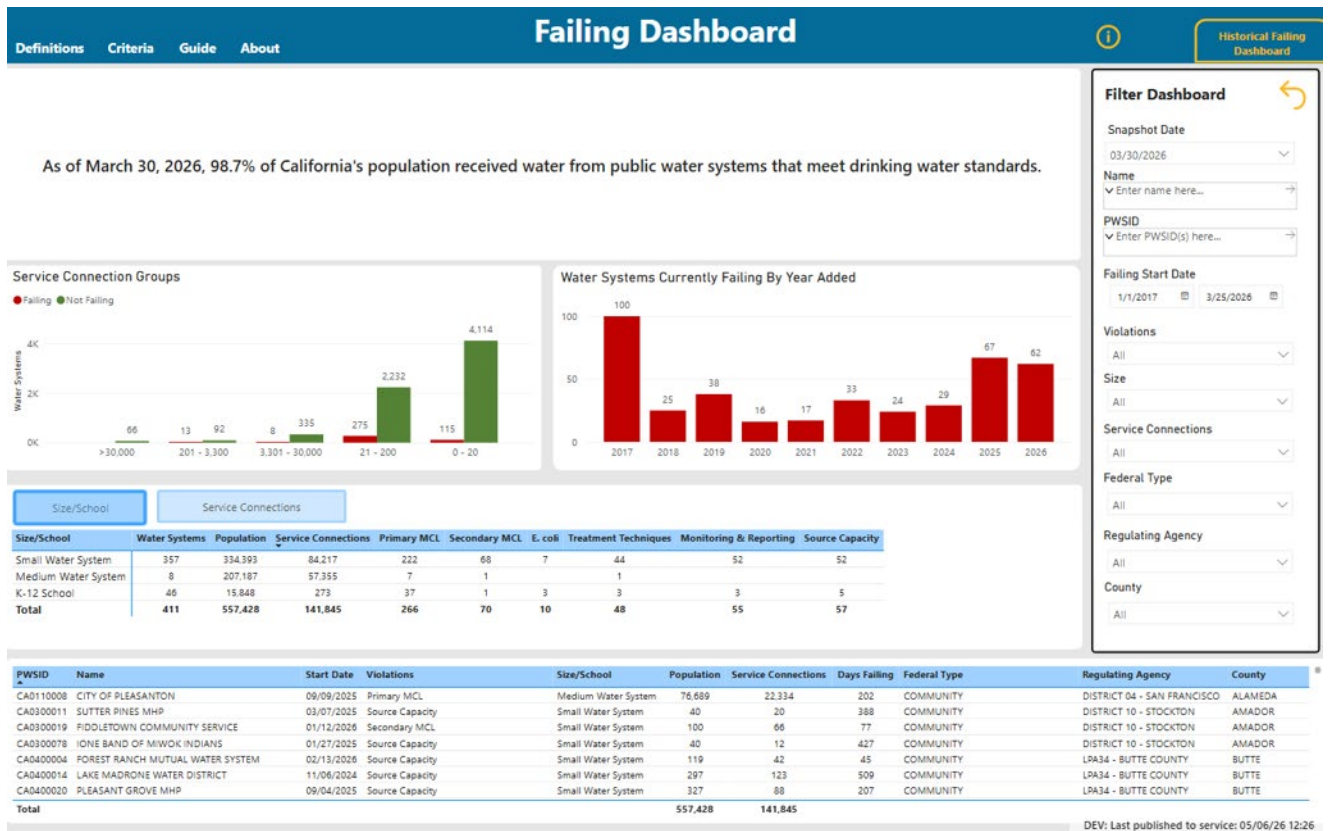
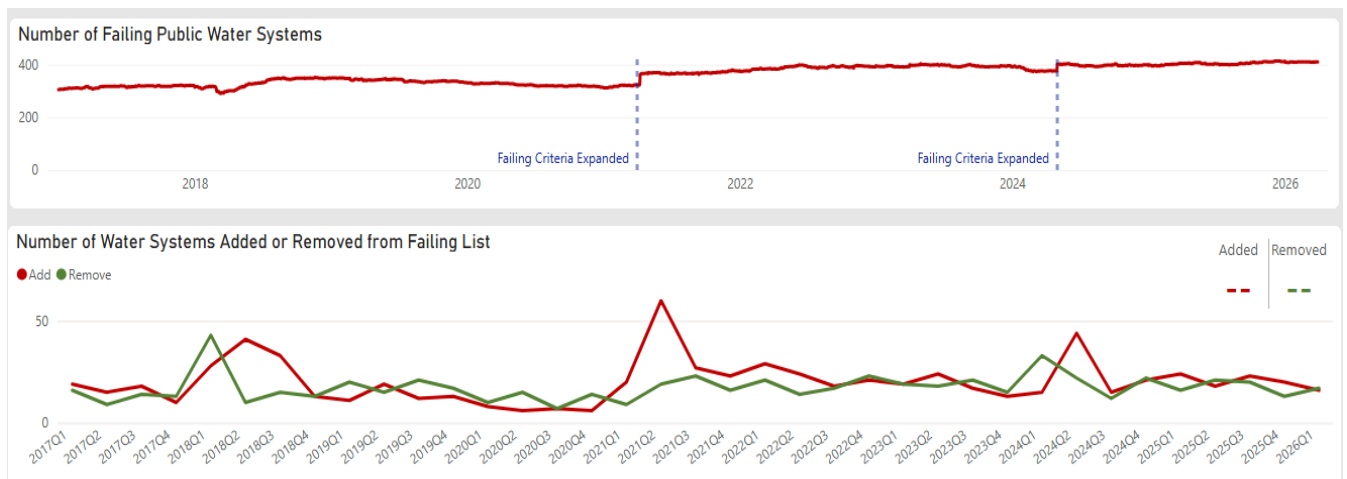


Figure 4: Public Water System Failing List History: Counts and Changes (2017-2025)



²⁵ [Failing Water System Dashboard](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoibkNDM2YjEtOGI3OS00MjVILWI5ZTYtNjFjOTI3MDUwOGI2IiwidCI6ImZIMTg2YT11LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9)

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoibkNDM2YjEtOGI3OS00MjVILWI5ZTYtNjFjOTI3MDUwOGI2IiwidCI6ImZIMTg2YT11LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9>

Table 7 below Summarizes the number of unique Failing public water systems at the end of each year for 2023-2025

Table 7: Total Counts of Failing Water Systems at the End of Each Year 2023-2025

2023	2024	2025
384	390	406

Through DDW and LPA regulatory oversight, water systems encountered new issues are identified and water systems who have addressed existing issues are removed from the Failing list. Table 8 and Table 9 summarize the number of unique public water systems and the population they serve that were added to and removed from the Failing List during the 2023–2025 reporting period, providing a snapshot of changes in system Failing status over time based on the available compliance data.

Table 8: Number of Unique Water Systems that were Added to and Removed from the Failing List from 2023-2025²⁶

	Reporting Year		
	2023	2024	2025
# of unique Systems Added to Failing List	71	94	84
# of unique Systems Removed from Failing List	73	87	69
Total	459	478	474

²⁶ Data was pulled on 2/23/2026.

Table 9: Population Served by the Water Systems that were Added to and Removed from the Failing List from 2023-2025²⁷

	Reporting Year		
	2023	2024	2025
# of Population Added to Failing List	1,396,381	274,613	352,800
# of Population Removed from Failing List	1,303,160	386,814	512,585

AT-RISK WATER SYSTEMS

SB 200 requires the identification of public water systems, community water systems, that may be at risk of failing to provide an adequate supply of safe drinking water, as well as an estimate of the number of households served by the state small water systems and domestic wells in high-risk areas. To address these requirements, separate Risk Assessment methodologies have been developed for public water systems, state small water systems, and domestic wells.

For public water systems, the Risk Assessment focuses on small and medium-sized systems that are more likely to experience challenges in providing reliable and safe drinking water. Large community water systems with more than 30,000 service connections or a population served exceeding 100,000 have been excluded from the assessment because historically they have not frequently appeared on the Failing List. The assessment methodology therefore has been optimized for small and medium-sized water systems.

The State Water Board uses a set of risk indicators, developed through a stakeholder-driven process, to identify At-Risk water systems. These indicators are organized into four categories: Water Quality, Accessibility, Affordability, and Technical, Managerial, and Financial (TMF) Capacity and have evolved over time. Together, these indicators provide a framework for evaluating system vulnerabilities and identifying water systems that may require additional support to maintain an adequate supply of safe drinking water. Table 10 provides a summary of the evaluated indicators and their associated categories across the assessment periods.

Table 10: Risk Indicators for Public Water Systems

Indicators	Category	2021	2022	2023-25
History of <i>E. coli</i> Presence	Water Quality	✓	✓	✓

²⁷ Data was pulled on 07/23/2026

Indicators	Category	2021	2022	2023-25
Increasing Presence of Water Quality Trends Toward MCL	Water Quality	✓	✓	✓
Treatment Technique Violations	Water Quality	✓	✓	✓
Past Presence on the Failing List	Water Quality	✓	✓	✓
Percentage of Sources Exceeding an MCL	Water Quality	✓	✓	✓
Maximum Duration of High Potential Exposure (HPE)	Water Quality	✓		
Constituents of Emerging Concern	Water Quality		✓	✓
Number of Sources	Accessibility	✓	✓	✓
Absence of Interties	Accessibility	✓	✓	✓
Water Source Types	Accessibility	✓		
DWR – Drought & Water Shortage Risk Assessment Results	Accessibility	✓	✓	✓
Critically Overdrafted Groundwater Basin	Accessibility	✓	✓	✓
Bottled or Hauled Water Reliance	Accessibility		✓	✓
Source Capacity Violations	Accessibility		✓	✓
Percent of Median Household Income (%MHI)	Affordability	✓	✓	✓
Extreme Water Bill	Affordability	✓	✓	✓
% Shut-Offs	Affordability	✓		
Residential Arrearage Burden	Affordability		✓	
Percentage of Residential Arrearages	Affordability		✓	
Household Socioeconomic Burden	Affordability			✓
Number of Service Connections	TMF Capacity	✓		
Operator Certification Violations	TMF Capacity	✓	✓	✓
Monitoring and Reporting Violations	TMF Capacity	✓	✓	✓
Significant Deficiencies	TMF Capacity	✓	✓	✓
Extensive Treatment Installed	TMF Capacity	✓		
Days Cash on Hand	TMF Capacity		✓	✓

Indicators	Category	2021	2022	2023-25
Operating Ratio	TMF Capacity		✓	✓
Net Annual Income	TMF Capacity		✓	✓

Risk Assessment results are publicly available through an interactive Risk Assessment Dashboard that is updated quarterly.²⁸ It lists the water systems’ risk results and maps their location, allowing users to explore system performance and risk indicators across all categories (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Risk Assessment Dashboard²⁹

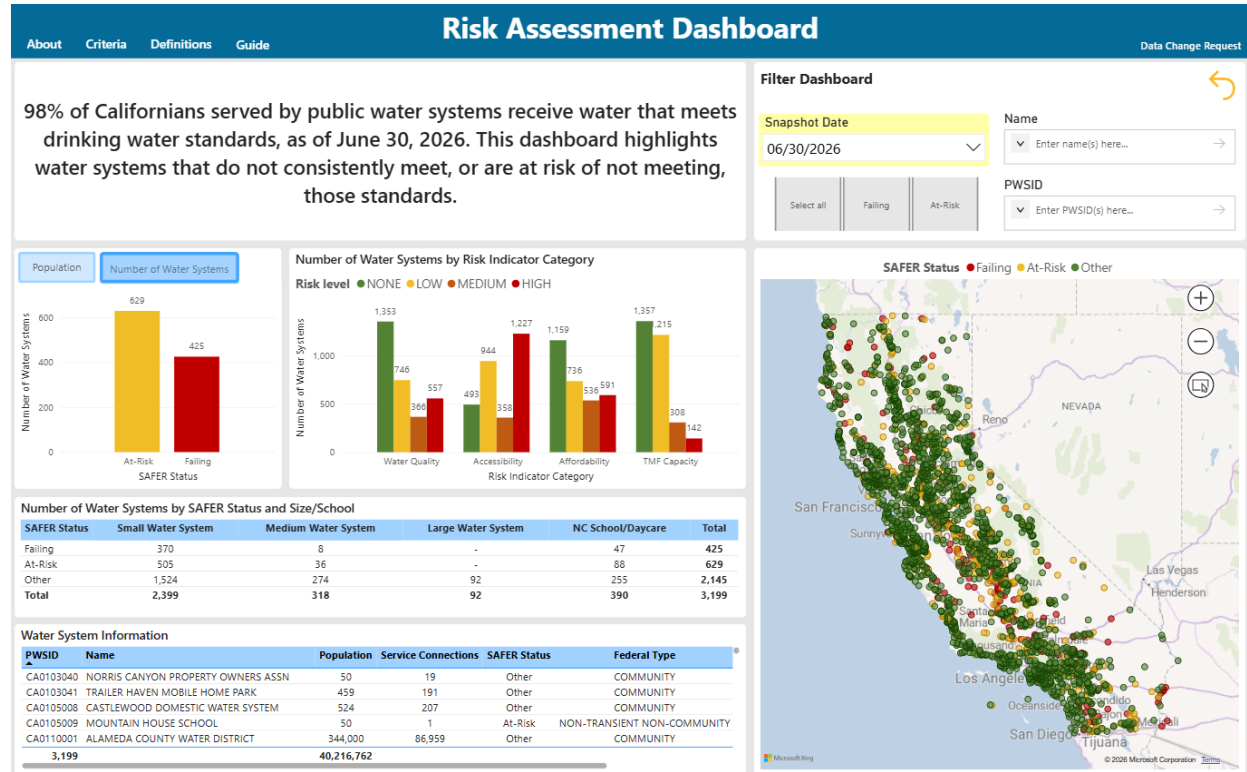


Table 11 summarizes the total number of unique At-Risk public water systems at the end of each year for 2023-2025.

²⁸ [Risk Assessment Dashboard:](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiaWJmMjY0ZTYtOTU2NS00Y2ZILWExMDAtNDI5YTlk4YThjMTdhliwidCI6ImZIMTg2YTI1LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9)
<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiaWJmMjY0ZTYtOTU2NS00Y2ZILWExMDAtNDI5YTlk4YThjMTdhliwidCI6ImZIMTg2YTI1LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9>

²⁹ [Risk Assessment Dashboard for Public Water Systems](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiaWJmMjY0ZTYtOTU2NS00Y2ZILWExMDAtNDI5YTlk4YThjMTdhliwidCI6ImZIMTg2YTI1LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9)
<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiaWJmMjY0ZTYtOTU2NS00Y2ZILWExMDAtNDI5YTlk4YThjMTdhliwidCI6ImZIMTg2YTI1LTdkNDktNDFINi05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9>

Table 11: Total Count of At-Risk Systems at the End of Each Year for 2023-2025

2023	2024	2025
613	589	406

COST ASSESSMENT

SB 200 directs the State Water Board to prepare an “estimate of the funding needed for the next fiscal year based on the amount available in the fund, anticipated funding needs, other existing funding sources, and other relevant data and information.” (Health & Saf. Code, § 116769, subd. (a)(5).) Thus, the Cost Assessment estimates the costs related to the implementation of interim and/or emergency measures and longer-term solutions for Failing and At-Risk systems. The Cost Assessment Model includes costs for not only the technical needs of implementing these solutions but also costs associated with the long-term operations of these solutions as well.

The Cost Assessment results are utilized by the State Water Board to inform the broader demands of the SAFER program as well as the annual funding needs. The embedded assumptions and cost estimates detailed in the Needs Assessment are not intended to be used to inform site-specific decisions but rather give an informative analysis on a statewide basis. Local solutions and actual costs will vary from system to system and will depend on site-specific details.

Two full-scale Cost Assessments have been conducted. In 2021, the State Water Board conducted its first Cost Assessment in partnership with the University of California Los Angeles Luskin Center for Innovation, Corona Environmental Consulting, and Sacramento State University Office of Water Programs. The results of that analysis were published in the 2021 Needs Assessment using available dataset from 2020.³⁰

The 2024 Needs Assessment was conducted through a two-year process, with five public workshops to solicit stakeholder feedback.³¹ The 2024 Cost Assessment included results for both Failing and At-Risk public water systems, and the total long-term and interim cost needs for high-risk state small water systems and domestic wells. The 2024 Cost Assessment estimated that the total long-term and interim cost needs for Failing and At-Risk public water systems is approximately \$5.4 billion, which is \$1.1 billion (26%) higher than the 2021 estimate. Table 12 below summarizes the count of public water systems while Table 13 summarizes the cost from both assessments, grouped by modeled solutions:

³⁰ [2021 Drinking Water Needs Assessment](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2021_needs_assessment.pdf)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2021_needs_assessment.pdf

³¹ [Drinking Water Quality: Needs Assessment | California State Water Resources Control Board](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/needs.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/needs.html

Table 12: Count of Modeled Solutions for Failing & At-Risk Public Water Systems

	Failing (2024)	At-Risk (2024)	Total (2024)	Total (2021)	Change from 2021
# Systems	385	613	998	935	↑ 63 (7%)
Modeled Long-Term Solutions					
Physical Consolidation	168 (44%)	266 (43%)	434 (43%)	206 (22%)	↑ 228 (111%)
Centralized Treatment	194 (50%)	N/A	194 (19%)	138 (15%)	↑ 56 (41%)
Decentralized Treatment	17 (4%)	N/A	17 (2%)	106 (11%)	↓ 89 (84%)
New Well	128 (33%)	188 (31%)	316 (32%)	935 (100%)	↓ 43 ³² (5%)
OEI	283 (74%)	450 (73%)	733 (73%)		
Managerial Assistance	227 (59%)	404 (66%)	631 (63%)		
Modeled Interim Solutions					
Decentralized Treatment	142 (37%)	N/A	142 (14%)	222 (24%)	↓ 8 (4%)
Bottled Water	72 (19%)	N/A	72 (7%)		

The estimated cost per solution type is summarized in the table below:

Table 13: Estimated Cost Per Solution for Failing & At-Risk Public Water Systems

	Failing (2024)	At-Risk (2024)	Total (2024)	Total (2021)	Cost Change from 2021
# Systems	385	613	998	935	↑ 63 (7%)
Modeled Long-Term Solutions					
Physical Consolidation	\$633	\$1,031	\$1,664	\$424	↑ \$1,240 (292%)
Centralized Treatment	\$319	N/A	\$319	\$401	↓ \$82 (20%)
Decentralized Treatment	\$1.0	N/A	\$1.0	\$19	↓ \$18 (95%)
New Well	\$652	\$1,131	\$1,783	\$2,570	↑ \$356 (14%)

³² There are 892 unique public water systems that have modeled new well, OEI, and/or managerial assistance in the 2024 Cost Assessment. The 2021 Cost Assessment results did not break out the costs for these long-term solutions. Therefore, the comparison between 2024 and 2021 requires a broader look across all three categories.

	Failing (2024)	At-Risk (2024)	Total (2024)	Total (2021)	Cost Change from 2021
OEI	\$304	\$621	\$925		
Managerial Assistance	\$118	\$100	\$218		
TOTAL:	\$2,027	\$2,883	\$4,910	\$3,414	↑ \$1,496 (44%)
Modeled Interim Solutions ³³					
Decentralized Treatment	\$403	N/A	\$403	\$845	↓ \$379 (45%)
Bottled Water	\$63	N/A	\$63		
TOTAL:	\$466	N/A	\$466	\$845	↓ \$379 (45%)
TOTAL COST:	\$2,493	\$2,883	\$5,376	\$4,259	↑ \$1,118 (26%)

AFFORDABILITY ASSESSMENT

Ensuring that drinking water is affordable is crucial to meeting California’s Human Right to Water mandate.³⁴ The COVID-related economic crisis magnified the need to address drinking water affordability for households and identify drinking water systems that require additional financial support to provide a safe and reliable drinking water supply.³⁵ The purpose of the Affordability Assessment is to identify disadvantaged community (DAC) water systems and non-transient non-community water systems that serve K-12 schools that have instituted customer drinking water charges exceeding the “Affordability Threshold” established by the State Water Board. This assessment is required to ensure compliance with state and federal drinking water standards and helps inform the State Water Board’s annual FEP.³⁶ However, the legislation does not define what the affordability threshold should be, nor is there specific guidance on how the State Water Board should evaluate affordability. The State Water Resources Control Board has worked with stakeholders to develop and refine the affordability indicators and thresholds since 2019 (Table 14).

³³ The modeled interim solution costs captured in this table represents the cost for the full duration of modeled interim assistance which is five years for public water systems.

³⁴ [State Water Board Resolution No. 2016-0010](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/2016/rs2016_0010.pdf)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/2016/rs2016_0010.pdf

³⁵ [Drinking Water COVID-19 Financial Impacts Survey | California State Water Resources Control Board](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/covid-19watersystemssurvey.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/covid-19watersystemssurvey.html

³⁶ [California Health and Safety Code, section 116769, subd. \(a\)\(2\)\(B\):](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=116769)

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=HSC§ionNum=116769.&utm

Table 14: Affordability Indicators (2021 – 2025)

Indicators	Household / Community	Rates-Based?	2021	2022	2023-25
Percent of Median Household Income (%MHI)	Community	Yes	✓	✓	✓
Extreme Water Bill	Community	Yes	✓	✓	✓
% Shut-Offs	Household	Yes	✓		
Percentage of Residential Arrearages	Household	Yes		✓	
Residential Arrearage Burden	Community	Yes		✓	
Household Socioeconomic Burden	Community	No			✓

Affordability Assessment results are publicly available through an interactive Affordability Assessment Dashboard that is updated bi-annually³⁷ (Figure 6). Year to year affordability assessment results is listed in Table 15, Table 16, and

Table 17.

³⁷ [Affordability Assessment Dashboard](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoieMGIyOWU3OTctNGZjNy00MDU2LTkwMmQtOGI5NjcxDGyN2ZiliwidCI6ImZIMTg2YT11LTdkNDktNDNFIn05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9):

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoieMGIyOWU3OTctNGZjNy00MDU2LTkwMmQtOGI5NjcxDGyN2ZiliwidCI6ImZIMTg2YT11LTdkNDktNDNFIn05OTQxLTA1ZDIyODFkMzZjMSJ9>

Figure 6: Affordability Assessment Dashboard

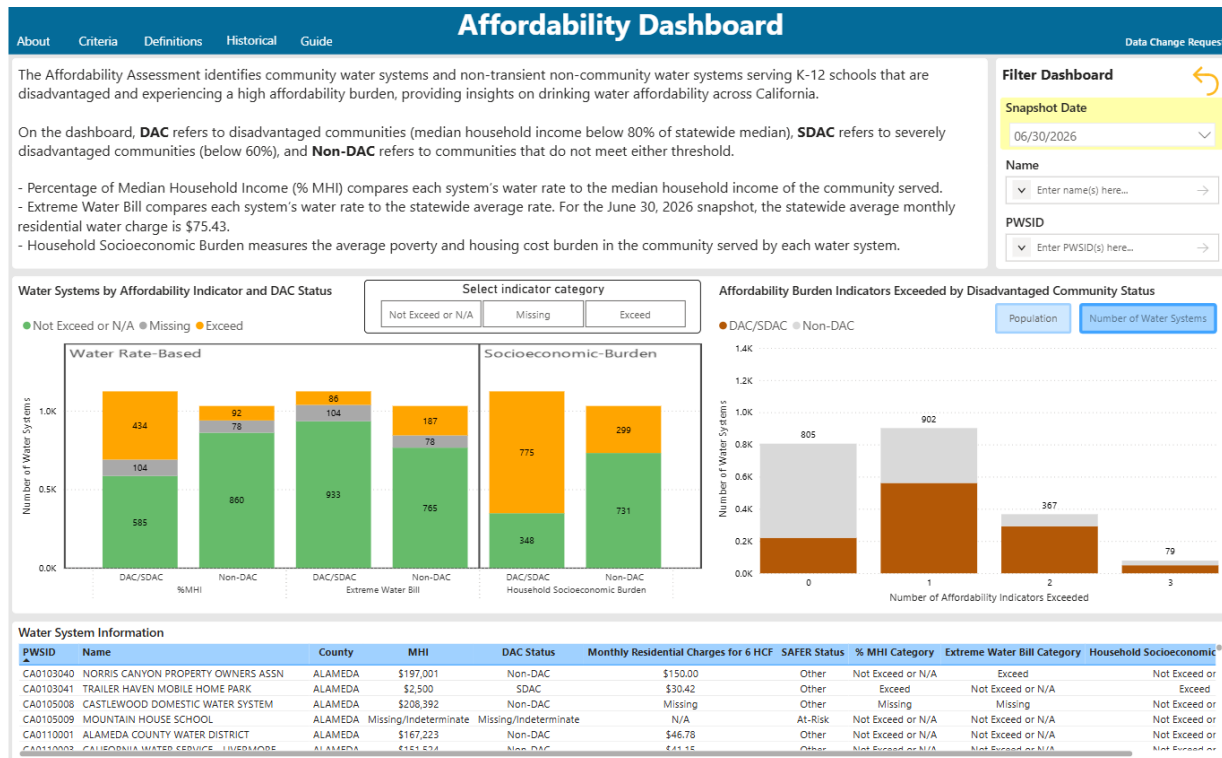


Table 15: Number of Water Systems Exceeding Individual Affordability Indicator Threshold in 2023

Community Status	Total Systems	%MHI	Extreme Water Bill	Household Socioeconomic Burden
DAC/SDAC	1,635	325 (20%)	84 (5%)	1,295 (79%)
Non-DAC	1,505	98 (7%)	197 (13%)	448 (30%)
Missing DAC Status³⁸	62	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	42 (68%)
TOTAL:	3,202	423 (13%)	284 (9%)	1,785 (56%)
Missing Data³⁹		593 (19%)	567 (18%)	6 (1%)
Not Applicable⁴⁰		702 (22%)	702 (22%)	0 (0%)

³⁸ Missing DAC Status refers to the list of systems that were included in the affordability assessment but lacked data necessary to calculate their MHI to determine their DAC status.

³⁹ Missing data: for %MHI; lacked water rates data, lacked data to calculate MHI; for Extreme Water Rates, lacked data on water rate charges, water rate was outside of \$5-\$500 range.

⁴⁰ Not applicable refers to systems who did not qualify to meet an indicator threshold: for % MHI, systems who did not charge for water; for Extreme Water Bill, systems that did not charge for water.

Table 16: Number of Water Systems Exceeding Individual Affordability Indicator Threshold in 2024

Community Status	Total Systems	%MHI	Extreme Water Bill	Household Socioeconomic Burden
DAC/SDAC	2,115	427 (20%)	124 (6%)	1,445 (68%)
Non-DAC	1,060	102 (10%)	171 (16%)	182 (17%)
Missing DAC Status⁴¹	3	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)
TOTAL:	3,178	529 (17%)	295 (9%)	1,628 (51%)
Missing Data⁴²		246 (8%)	246 (8%)	0 (0%)
Not Applicable⁴³		995 (31%)	995 (31%)	4 (0%)

Table 17: Number of Water Systems Exceeding Individual Affordability Indicator Threshold in 2025

Community Status	Total Systems	%MHI	Extreme Water Bill	Household Socioeconomic Burden
DAC/SDAC	2,112	427 (20%)	125 (6%)	1,439 (68%)
Non-DAC	1,061	99 (9%)	168 (16%)	178 (17%)
Missing DAC Status⁴⁴	3	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)
TOTAL:	3,176	526 (17%)	293 (9%)	1,618 (51%)
Missing Data⁴⁵		292 (9%)	292 (9%)	0 (0%)

⁴¹ Missing DAC status refers to the list of systems that were included in the Affordability Assessment but lacked data necessary to calculate their MHI to determine their DAC status.

⁴² Missing data: %MHI, lacked water rates data or lacked data to calculate MHI; Extreme Water Rates, lacked water rates data or reported water rate was outside of \$5-\$500 range. For more information on Missing data, see [Appendix: Affordability Assessment Methodology](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf)
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf

⁴³ Not applicable refers to systems who did not qualify to meet a particular indicator threshold, either because they did not charge for water (for %MHI and Extreme Water Bill) or because sociodemographic data was missing (for Household Socioeconomic Burden). For more information on Not Applicable data, see [Appendix: Affordability Assessment Methodology](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf)
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf

⁴⁴ Missing DAC status refers to the list of systems that were included in the Affordability Assessment but lacked data necessary to calculate their MHI to determine their DAC status.

⁴⁵ Missing data: %MHI, lacked water rates data or lacked data to calculate MHI; Extreme Water Rates, lacked water rates data or reported water rate was outside of \$5-\$500 range. For more information on Missing data, see [Appendix: Affordability Assessment Methodology](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf)

Community Status	Total Systems	%MHI	Extreme Water Bill	Household Socioeconomic Burden
Not Applicable ⁴⁶		972 (31%)	972 (31%)	4 (0%)

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance (TA) refers to direct support to communities by third parties under contract with the State Water Board. These parties identify challenges, develop plans, build capacity and develop application materials to access water infrastructure funding. In many cases technical assistance does not eliminate the need for other capital improvements need, but it should increase the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of the water systems. Technical assistance is designed to assist water systems in developing the financial and managerial structures necessary to maintain a sustainable water system, including asset management plans, water rate studies, fiscal policies, drought plans, etc. A combination of updated infrastructure and proactive long-term managerial and fiscal policies can help address affordability issues and preventatively meet the needs of these water systems before expensive emergency responses are necessary.

The State Water Board prioritizes water systems serving small, disadvantaged communities (DACs) for TA support. TA providers utilize the results for the Needs Assessment as a starting point to better assess entrenched challenges and work with the water systems to better understand their needs. TA providers often support project scoping, including development of an engineering report, cost estimate, plans and specifications, and necessary environmental documentation for the most feasible long-term solution. In addition, the State Water Board may use a regional approach to pool services to multiple systems within an area to reduce costs.⁴⁷ In all cases, the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance staff are assigned to oversee and manage the scope, cost and progress of all technical assistance work, with increased attention given to new types of services that have been approved under the SAFER program.

The State Water Board continues to expand investments in the TA program, with a focus on small, disadvantaged communities and consolidations. Legislation enacted in Fall 2021 added qualified 'Technical Assistance Providers' as a new eligible funding recipient for monies from the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund. The State

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf

⁴⁶ Not applicable refers to systems who did not qualify to meet a particular indicator threshold, either because they did not charge for water (for %MHI and Extreme Water Bill) or because sociodemographic data was missing (for Household Socioeconomic Burden). For more information on Not Applicable data, see [Appendix: Affordability Assessment Methodology](#)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025affordabilityassessment-methodology.pdf

⁴⁷ [Policy for Developing the Fund Expenditure Plan:](#)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/sustainable_water_solutions/docs/2023/final_policy_for_dev_fep_sadwf_0130.pdf

Water Board developed a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to identify qualified TA Providers,⁴⁸ including for-profit entities. As of 2025, the State Water Board has qualified 21 eligible technical assistance providers. In 2025, DFA had 12 drinking water technical assistance providers actively providing assistance. The expanded list of qualified technical assistance providers enables new types and a greater volume of services to be available to communities and public water systems.

Table 18: Technical Assistance Providers

Technical Assistance Providers	
California Urban Water Agencies	Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group
Sanbell Engineering	Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Community Water Center	Self-Help Enterprises
GHD, Inc.	Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability	University Enterprises Inc. at California State University, Sacramento
NV5, Inc.	University of California at Davis, School of Law

From 2019 through 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board provided approximately \$165.6 million in technical assistance funding to support 809 water systems and communities through work plan agreements with multiple technical assistance providers. Of this total, around \$99.3 million was allocated to 273 projects focused on comprehensive planning efforts, which help guide systems toward securing construction funding agreements. Table 19 summarizes the number of unique water systems receiving technical assistance, organized by the year in which support was first initiated. It is important to note that some projects span multiple years to complete, and certain systems may receive multiple technical assistance assignments for different tasks or through different providers.

⁴⁸ [Drinking Water Technical Assistance Provider Request For Qualifications Guidelines](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/docs/2022/rfq-guidelines.pdf)
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/docs/2022/rfq-guidelines.pdf

Table 19: Number of Water Systems Receiving Technical Assistance (Grouped by SAFER Status, 2019-2025)⁴⁹

SAFER Status	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Failing	54	37	55	23	28	15	25
At-Risk	37	18	38	18	20	7	8
Potentially At-Risk	20	12	22	10	10	3	5
Not At-Risk	47	42	74	19	33	7	1
Not Assessed	24	18	31	9	13	20	6
TOTAL:	182	127	220	79	104	52	45

Table 20 summarizes the amount of funding committed by funding sources to support technical assistance via master funding agreements with qualified technical assistance providers. As of December 2025, the amount of funding remaining for multi-year technical assistance master agreements is approximately \$123.2 million.

Table 20: Technical Assistance Funding Committed to Master Agreement (2019 – 2025)

Year	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Set-Aside	Prop 150	Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund	General Fund
2025	\$0	\$0	\$83,039,908	\$0
2024	\$0	- \$213,260	\$1,336,900	\$324,775
2023	\$0	-\$163,995	\$56,368,394	\$16,885,948
2022	\$0	-\$364,057	\$51,766,654	\$2,176,087
2021	\$0	- \$481,187	\$8,058,045	\$0
2020	\$0	- \$11,693,393 ⁵¹	\$67,171,151	\$0
2019	\$0	\$250,000	\$0	\$0
TOTAL:	\$0	-\$ 12,665,892	\$ 267,741,052	\$ 19,386,810

⁴⁹ These are the number of unique SAFER systems which received technical assistance each year. A total of 809 different water systems received technical through these years combined.

⁵⁰ For 2020 – 2025, this represents the amount of Prop 1 funding disencumbered due to either funding swap or unused funding at the end of a funding agreement. A total amount of \$24,998,396 Prop 1 funds was encumbered for technical assistance from July 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019.

⁵¹ In 2020, Prop 1 funds on five technical assistance agreements were swapped for Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund funding.

PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Since 2019, the percentage of Failing and At-Risk systems receiving assistance from the State Water Board and the amount of funding received each fiscal year has increased year to year, with a majority of funding going towards capital projects. Table 21 summarizes the amount of funding provided for planning and construction projects from 2019 through 2025. In Table 21, there are fewer projects than systems because one project can provide construction or consolidation solutions that serve multiple water systems. So, a single funded effort can help several systems at the same time. Table 22 and Table 23 summarize which funding programs supported these projects.

Table 21: Planning and Construction Funding Summary (2019 – 2025)

Funding Provided	# of Water Systems	# of Projects	Planning Funding	Construction Funding
2025	84	44	\$7.5 M	\$345 M
2024	98	88	\$17.4 M	\$752 M
2023	82	64	\$5.8 M	\$448.2 M
2022	55	48	\$6.2 M	\$749.0 M
2021	73	60	\$8.3 M	\$511.4 M
2020	55	40	\$5.2 M	\$209.5 M
2019	37	33	\$7.0 M	\$188.0 M
TOTAL:	484	377	\$57.4 M	\$3,203 M

Table 22: Planning Funding Sources (2019 – 2025)

Funding Provided	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	Drinking Water Bonds	General Fund	Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund
2025	\$7 M	\$0 M	\$0.5 M	\$0 M
2024	\$16 M	\$0 M	\$1.4 M	\$0 M
2023	\$4.3 M	\$0.4 M	\$0.8 M	\$0.3 M
2022	\$2.0 M	\$2.1 M	\$2.1 M	\$0
2021	\$2.0 M	\$6.2 M	\$0	\$0.1 M
2020	\$1.2 M	\$2.8 M	\$0	\$1.2 M
2019	\$6.6 M	\$0.7 M	\$0	\$0
TOTAL:	\$39.1 M	\$12.2 M	\$4.8 M	\$1.6 M

Table 23: Construction Funding Sources (2019 – 2025)

Funding Provided	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	Drinking Water Bonds	General Fund	Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund
2025	\$300.1 M	\$3.3 M	\$10.8 M	\$30.8 M
2024	\$525 M	\$47.9 M	\$156 M	\$22.7 M
2023	\$222.0 M	\$11.2 M	\$192.5 M	\$22.5 M
2022	\$689.0 M	\$13.1 M	\$42.5 M	\$7.2 M
2021	\$394.3 M	\$83.2 M	\$4.8 M	\$29.4 M
2020	\$131.1 M	\$22.5 M	\$4.4 M	\$45.8 M
2019	\$166.1 M	\$21.8 M	\$0	\$0
TOTAL:	\$2,427.6 M	\$2037	\$410.8 M	\$158.4 M

The State Water Board continues to work on several funding process improvements that are currently being implemented. These are described further in the FY 2025-26 Safe and Affordable Drinking Water FEP, which was adopted by the Board November 4, 2025.

CONSOLIDATIONS

Small water systems are often less resilient to natural disasters like drought and wildfire, have more difficulty adjusting to regulatory changes, and struggle to fund infrastructure maintenance and replacement. Water system partnerships and consolidations are proven strategies that have successfully benefited many small communities. Water system partnerships strengthen the collective ability of all stakeholders to ensure safe and sustainable drinking water. These partnerships can be either informal, such as resource sharing, or formal, such as contracting between water systems. Consolidation, or the combining of two or more water systems, can be either physical or managerial, and leverage economies of scale that can result in cost savings from resource sharing. Physical consolidation is the joining of two or more water systems, which commonly includes a smaller system being subsumed into a larger water system. When a physical consolidation occurs, one water system is dissolved, and its customers are provided service by the receiving water system. If the project can be expanded to include multiple water systems in the area, the State Water Board may support a regionalization project that benefits a broader customer base. Managerial consolidation occurs when a small water system becomes part of a larger water system for all managerial purposes but continues to use its original water supply and distribution system. More organization and connectivity in the water system landscape creates a more sustainable and resilient water supply.

SAFER program funds help small water systems pay for consolidations and may incentivize the larger water systems to assume additional responsibility where feasible. Consolidations typically require community engagement, water system governance

changes, complex engineering, and multiple agreements between numerous parties. DDW's SAFER Engagement Unit staff and engineers assist with initiating partnership discussions, outreach to other agencies and stakeholders, and facilitate possible consolidation alternatives. Consolidation success stories and project examples illustrating community challenges, and how SAFER Engagement Units help address them, can be viewed on the Water Partnership Success Stories.⁵² Detailed information, including the completed counts of physical consolidations per SAFER status are summarized in Table 24 and in Table 25 summarized the active mandatory consolidations at the end of 2025.

Table 24: Completed Consolidations by Year and SAFER Status (2019 – 2025)⁵³

SAFER Status	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
Failing	8	5	2	5	6	6	8	40
At-Risk	0	0	2	3	2	4	2	13
Other	32	19	24	23	16	20	17	151
TOTAL:	40	24	28	31	24	30	27	204

Table 25: Mandatory Consolidations in Process at the end of 2025

Joining System	Receiving System	Population	Service Connection	County	Year Initiated
East Orosi Community Services District	Orosi Public Utility District	423	103	Tulare	2018
Old River Mutual Water Company	City of Bakersfield	130	19	Kern	2016
South Kern Mutual Water Company	City of Bakersfield	32	13	Kern	2016
Riverdale Estates	Indio Water Authority	300	186	Riverside	2025
West Water Company	Sonoma County CSA 41-Fitch	40	13	Sonoma	2020
Total:		925			

⁵² [Water Partnership Success Stories:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/partnershipsuccess.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/partnershipsuccess.html

⁵³ The annual consolidation numbers, as well as the cumulative totals across years, may slightly differ from those reported in the 2025 Needs Assessment Report due to data cleaning processes implemented to improve overall accuracy.

ADMINISTRATORS

A water system Administrator is a qualified specialist that provides technical, managerial, and/or financial expertise to struggling water systems. Disadvantaged communities served by a Failing water system are eligible for an Administrator funded through the SAFER program. The Administrator Policy Handbook⁵⁴ (Policy) provides directions regarding the appointment of Administrators by the State Water Board.

Administrators may be individual persons, businesses, non-profit organizations, local agencies like counties or nearby larger utilities, and other entities. Administrators act on behalf of a designated water system as a general manager or may be assigned limited specific duties, such as supervising an infrastructure improvement project. Administrators are often appointed for a limited term to help a water system through the consolidation process or to come into compliance.

The appointment of an Administrator is an authority given to the State Water Board to act when a water system, based on the Needs Assessment and the direct knowledge and expertise of DDW/LPA staff, is identified as in need but does not have the resources itself to secure one. The State Water Board does recognize the significant and, in some cases, the potentially disruptive effect of ordering acceptance of an Administrator and therefore uses this authority prudently; only doing so after careful consideration and seeking and incorporating significant community engagement, as stipulated in the Administrator Policy Handbook.

At present, qualified Administrators include:

- Counties (e.g., Sonoma and Tulare)
- For-profit water systems (e.g., Russian River Utility), and
- Engineering services providers (e.g., Provost and Prichard, Stantec Consulting, SRT Consultants)

Since obtaining a list of qualified Administrators in 2020, the State Water Board has designated 17 public water systems⁵⁵ in need of an Administrator and held public meetings for the impacted communities, representing approximately 4,846 people and 1,501 service connections in seven counties.⁵⁶ Currently, there are 15 Administrator projects with appointments and funding approved by the State Water Board and two completed projects (Table 26 and Table 27).

⁵⁴ [Administrator Policy Handbook](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/docs/2025/administrator-policy-handbook.pdf)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/docs/2025/administrator-policy-handbook.pdf

⁵⁵ Ten systems were initiated in 2020, three in 2021, one in 2022, one in 2023, and two in 2024.

⁵⁶ [Water System Administrators](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/administrator.html)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/administrator.html

Table 26: Administrator Projects – Currently Active⁵⁷

System Name	Population	County	Funding Approved by State Water Board	Administrator Appointed	Year Appointed
East Orosi CSD	423	Tulare	\$994,544	County of Tulare	2022
Six Acres Water Company	66	Sonoma	\$728,288	SRT Consultants	2024
Keeler CSD	66	Inyo	\$1,221,173	Provost and Pritchard	2023
Cazadero Water Company	250	Sonoma	\$512,765	Russian River Utility	2023
Teviston CSD	370	Tulare	\$1,794,595	Stantec Consulting	2023
NorCal Water Works	45	Tehama	\$1,166,558	Provost and Pritchard	2023
Sierra Vista Water Association	44	Tulare	\$1,166,558	Provost and Pritchard	2023
South Kern Mutual Water Company	22	Kern	\$688,882	Provost and Pritchard	2024
Old River Mutual Water Company	126	Kern	\$688,882	Provost and Pritchard	2024
West Water Company	40	Sonoma	\$184,670	County of Sonoma	2024

⁵⁷ Through December 31, 2025.

System Name	Population	County	Funding Approved by State Water Board	Administrator Appointed	Year Appointed
Las Deltas Mutual Water Company	375	Fresno	\$773,937	Provost and Pritchard	2024
Lake Morena Views Mutual Water Company	360	San Diego	\$1,060,009	Stantec Consulting	2024
Allensworth CSD	521	Tulare	\$965,787	Stantec Consulting	2024
Daggett CSD	795	San Bernadino	\$573,540	Provost and Pritchard	2025
Valley Ford Water Association	88	Sonoma	\$394,761	Russian River Utility	2025
TOTAL:	3,591		\$12,914,949		

Table 27: Administrator Projects- Completed

System Name	Population	County	Funding	Administrator	Year Appointed	Year Completed
North Edwards Water District	944	Kern	\$309,457	California Rural Water Association	2020	2023
Six Acres Water Company	66	Sonoma	\$214,472	Demery and Associates ⁵⁸	2022	2024
TOTAL:	1,010		\$523,929			

⁵⁸ Demery and Associates requested to step away from the administrator appointment for Six Acres Water Company, SRT Consultants was appointed as the replacement administrator in 2024.

ONGOING NEEDS

REGULATORY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

California statutes currently do not have specific, measurable standards for evaluating TMF capacity. Health and Safety Code section 116375⁵⁹, subdivision (g) requires the State Water Board to adopt regulations for minimum acceptable financial assurances to demonstrate a public water system's operational and maintenance capability. Health and Safety Code section 116540⁶⁰, subdivision (a) allows TMF requirements to be included in individual water system permits. However, in absence of formal regulations setting general TMF requirements for public water systems, any permit requirements must be system-specific to prevent creating underground regulations in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act.

Senate Bill 1188 (SB 1188)⁶¹, enacted in 2024, requires the State Water Board to establish minimum TMF capacity standards for community water systems serving fewer than 10,000 people or 3,300 service connections and for nontransient noncommunity water systems that serve K–12 schools. The standards may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Source water adequacy, related to both supply and quality.
- 2) Infrastructure adequacy, including source, treatment, distribution, and storage.
- 3) Adequacy of organizational staffing levels and staff technical knowledge, including internal management of outside contractors.
- 4) Adequate staffing and organizational governance structures enabling transparent and informed decisions.
- 5) Effectiveness of external contracts, contractors, or other agreements.
- 6) Revenue sufficiency, including adequate financial reserves to plan, operate, maintain, and restore or replace the systems water infrastructure as it reaches the end of its useful life.
- 7) Credit worthiness.
- 8) Fiscal management and technical staffing.
- 9) Adequate management and technical staffing.
- 10) Governance and public processes.

DDW is currently developing new TMF standards in accordance with SB 1188 and HSC section 116375.⁶² These standards are intended to establish measurable criteria for evaluating system capacity, including elements such as financial sustainability, infrastructure condition, and managerial oversight. In order to support the development of new TMF standards, DDW is pursuing a contract funded by the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to support the development of financial and managerial capacity

⁵⁹ [Health and Safety Code section 116375:](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=116375.&lawCode=HSC)

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=116375.&lawCode=HSC

⁶¹ [Senate Bill No. 1188: SB-1188 Drinking water: technical, managerial, and financial standards:](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB1188&utm_)

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB1188&utm_

⁶² [Health and Safety Code section 116375:](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=116375.&lawCode=HSC)

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=116375.&lawCode=HSC

metrics, baseline performance standards, and related regulatory implementation approaches for public water systems. This work includes identifying and evaluating capacity metrics, assessing data availability and feasibility, and recommending practical regulatory and program implementation approaches. The resulting TMF standards, once adopted, will strengthen the state's ability to proactively identify and assist systems at risk of long-term capacity challenges. Water systems will be required to comply with the new TMF standards within two years of adoption.

DATA & DATA SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

The State Water Board's primary violation, enforcement and regulatory tracking database, Safe Drinking Water Information Systems (SDWIS), was designed for reporting compliance to the U.S. EPA for national tracking purposes. The database was not designed for the type of complex risk assessments being done in California or tailored to California's specific water quality regulations or drought-monitoring needs. SDWIS is limited in its ability to store TMF data such as source capacity enforcement actions, boil water notices, how water system connections are utilized, water quality trends, asset inventory or condition information etc.

Several efforts to augment this data collection and management have been made by the State Water Board, such as the Electronic Annual Report, the SAFER Clearinghouse, and the enterprise data system Water Technical Access Portal (WaterTAP) currently under development.

COORDINATION AMONGST STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

Timely coordination between the State Water Board and other State and Federal agencies can advance public water system capacity development. The State Water Board has partnered closely with the Department of Water Resources, the California Public Utilities Commission, the Office of Environment Health Hazard Assessment, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and many others to foster better relationships and identify areas where better coordination can result in improved outcomes for public water systems and communities. Work will continue in order to enhance data and information sharing across agencies to improve coordination, better decision-making, and reduce redundant data reporting needs.

LOCAL BARRIERS

The State Water Board used a series of workshops to identify capacity development barriers at the water system and community level. Examples of the barriers include:

- Workforce development limitations
- Difficulty tracking state and federal regulatory requirements
- Difficulty raising water rates
- Water System Board member education and lack of participation
- Lack of public participation in water system governance or decision-making
- Lack of management and/or technical experience

- Inadequate infrastructure
- Inadequate financial capacity and financial accountability

The SAFER program continues to collaborate with the water systems, local communities and other state/federal agencies to help alleviate the impact of those barriers.