



# Media Release

## **SAFER drinking water advisory group welcomes new appointees**

*Members represent water systems, communities, local agencies, partners and tribes*

**December 18, 2024**

**Contact:** [Dimitri Stanich](#) – Information Officer

**SACRAMENTO** – The State Water Resources Control Board recently announced eight appointments and two re-appointments to the [Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience \(SAFER\) Advisory Group](#), which provides input on the [Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund](#)'s annual spending priorities to ensure they reflect the needs and perspectives of California communities. The new [appointees](#) and re-appointees join nine continuing members.

The advisory group comprises members with diverse drinking water backgrounds and experiences, including representatives of public water systems, local agencies, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and residents served by domestic wells or water systems in disadvantaged communities. The group meets quarterly to provide feedback on key SAFER plans and proposals.

“Helping Californians achieve the human right to water is one of the board’s top priorities, and the SAFER Advisory Group is a critical partner in this effort,” said Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel. “Advisory group members bring essential community perspectives and lived experiences that inform our policymaking and financial-assistance discussions. Their commitment and partnership ensure our actions will better respond to the various and changing needs of small communities and their water systems. I look forward to our collaboration and welcome the new appointees.”

In 2019, California enacted Senate Bill 200, establishing the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund (SADW) to advance the [human right to water](#). The same year, the board launched the SAFER drinking water program to administer the SADW Fund and several complementary funding sources. Together with the board’s regulatory authorities, data, analysis and other tools, the SAFER program uses this funding to improve access to safe and affordable drinking water for all Californians, especially those in disadvantaged communities. The board adopts and publishes a [Fund Expenditure Plan](#) annually to outline goals for the SADW fund; the plan is developed in consultation with advisory group members.

“The SAFER program is a lifeline to many small, disadvantaged communities, and I am honored to represent their needs as a new member of the advisory group,” said Porterville Assistant City Manager Michael Knight. “Porterville and many of our surrounding communities have already benefited from the SAFER team’s work. I look



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • [www.waterboards.ca.gov](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov)



forward to using these experiences to help bridge the gap for others who are struggling with failing drinking water systems and need assistance for their unique challenges.”

The advisory group's appointees serve staggered two-year terms and are selected through an application process. The reappointed and newly appointed members represent communities throughout California and will serve through Dec. 31, 2026. Listed by [appointment category](#) and affiliation, they are:

- Erick Orellana (reappointed), non-governmental organization, Community Water Center
- Kristin Dobbin (reappointed), member of the public, UC Berkeley
- Juan Cano, technical assistance advisor, Self-Help Enterprises
- Tequita Jefferson, resident, Pixley
- Norma I. Amezcua, resident, Indio
- Irene Cacho, resident, Le Grand
- Angela Islas, non-governmental organization, Central California Environmental Justice Network
- Parry Klassen, local agencies, Valley Water Collaborative
- Michael Knight, public water system, Porterville
- Adam J. Rausch, technical assistance advisor, GHD Engineering

The following current SAFER Advisory Group members will continue to serve through Dec. 31, 2025:

- Stephanie Anognason, local agencies, Madera County Groundwater Sustainability Agency
- Don James, tribal representative, Tolowa Dee-Ni' Nation
- Edwin Alonzo, resident, Victorville
- Rami Kahlon, public water system, California Water Service
- Isabel Solorio, resident, Lanare
- James Sullivan, resident, Domestic well owner, Mendocino
- Siverio Pérez, resident, Royal Oaks
- Soren Nelson, non-governmental organization, Association of California Water Agencies
- Shannon Murphy, technical assistance provider, Water Quality Association

The board acknowledges and extends gratitude to members whose appointments end at the end of 2024. They are:

- Sarah Rutherford, local agencies, Kaweah Water Foundation
- Martha Curiel, member of the public, Woodville
- Chelsea Tu, non-governmental organization, Monterey Water
- Rob Burroughs, resident, Small Water System Operator- Cottonwood, CA
- Tonya Moreno, resident, Le Grand, CA
- Castulo Estrada, public water system, Coachella Valley Water District

- Ileana Miranda, public water system, San Jerardo Cooperative, Inc.
- Michael S. Prado Sr., public water system, Sultana Community Services District
- Eva Dominguez, technical assistance provider, Self-Help Enterprises

More [information](#) about the SAFER Advisory Group can be found on the board's website.

*The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for current and future generations.*



The SAFER Drinking Water Program includes projects funded by the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, which 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.