

SAFER Drinking Water Advisory Group Meeting #4

Meeting Notes | December 5, 2024

Overview

The Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Advisory Group participated in the final meeting of 2024. Meeting topics included supporting Domestic Wells and State Small Water Systems, Program accomplishments and a 2024-2025 fiscal overview. Staff also shared gratitude to the exiting Advisory Group members, welcomed new members and solicited Advisory Group announcements.

Domestic Well and State Small Water Systems Efforts

The SAFER Advisory Group provided the following recommendations:

- More data on domestic wells, such as how many there are and in what locations; how many can be consolidated, etc.
 - We need to determine what data is currently available and how we grow the data submissions from counties. This could require more legislation. Other states have laws that trigger testing at the point of land transfer.
 - There could be incentives to work together with counties to collect and report water quality data.
 - We need to continue to connect domestic well users along the path of consolidation projects.
- More education and outreach need to be provided on available resources+.
 - More use of social media platforms and accessible online resources, information can be hard to find.
 - Town of Mendocino was successful in providing a local presence to do listening sessions with the community to build trust.
 - Mailers or door-to-door efforts may be needed in some communities.
 - More collaboration with groundwater associations: wellowner.org and privatewellclass.org provide free information on how to test and do maintenance.
 - Should consider realtors as partners to help new home buyers understand domestic wells on their property.
 - For outreach -continue to work with counties and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), some people don't know who to call.
- Water Boards should continue to coordinate with partners since there is limited authority and funding.
- Construction should begin on domestic well consolidations for communities receiving Technical Assistance (TA).
- Provide benchmarks for the number of communities without TA.
 - More TA for domestic well samples. Provide benchmarks for decentralized solutions.
 - Public Water systems could use an evaluation standard or metric for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) (expectations for Public Water Systems (PWS) monitoring).

- Make a goal to consolidate a maximum number of domestic wells. Create a path for individuals who have not been able to access funding due to income limits set exclusively for moderate/middle-income households with domestic wells.
- Provide a way for renters to access water sampling data for private wells they depend on.
- Continue funding for interim bottled and hauled water.
- Continue Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) support for Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) domestic well programs.
- Looking for existing projects where systems are connecting.
- Keep a private well advisor/representative in the SAFER advisory group.
- Self-Help should continue supporting consolidations and working with NGOs.
- Clarify the relationships between Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS), SGMA, and Drought Resilience Interagency and Partners Collaborative (DRIP).

SAFER Program Accomplishments and Updates

The Division of Financial Assistance presented the SAFER program accomplishments in 2024 and updates on the draft Fund Expenditure Plan for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 with details on the available funding, priorities, and targets. The Division of Drinking Water presented on additional SAFER accomplishments. The SAFER Advisory Group provided the following observations:

- Advanced Payment helps the smaller water systems with securing loans and meeting payment demands. A plan for funding could be Phase 1: Governance, Phase 2: A Bridge Loan to get things going. Keeping O&M available for systems losing capacity such as paying for chlorination.
- Existing community projects could use money in the planning stage.
- Follow up directly with counties on small domestic systems despite limitation of response authority.
- Define which counties get funding on the Needs Assessment.
- How do we coordinate [SB200](#) and [SB 552](#) for water supply planning.
 - Should we use a task force similarly to what we did in drought?
- Consolidation is too slow and requires time management coordination and review.
 - There is a desire to increase the efficiency of managerial consolidations.
 - Provide special consideration to systems that cannot consolidate.
 - Provide special consideration for source capacity and systems that don't have an acute and chronic health threat.
 - Provide consideration for tribal water systems.
- Point of Use and Point of Entry (POU/POE) water supply methods may be a next discussion topic using East Porterville consolidation as an example.
- Consider expediting Project Management (PM) procedures such as the Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate process and setting a consolidation goal from 14 years to 5 or at best 3 years.
- Consider identifying consolidation times and determine what is needed for tribal water systems.

AGM Membership

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

The reappointed and newly appointed members that will serve through Dec. 31, 2026. Listed by appointment category and affiliation 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

AG Member Announcements

- Shannon Murphy- Resident Developing a study on cost analysis of POU/POE through the Water Quality Research Foundation
 - <https://www.wqrf.org/completed-studies.html>
- James Sullivan-Mendocino presented a first feasibility study on wells/smalls that may lead to a PWS. There were 80/150 attendees at the presentation.

- Erick Orellana-Community Water Center: Supporting engagement on project to extend water services from Cal Water to West Goshen.

Public Comments

- Angela Islas- Looking ahead to 2025 priorities, hoping for approval of Prop 4
 - How do we support water systems who have to wait to get access to interim water?
 - Need to better integrate POU/POE for cleaning and cooking.
 - Secondary contaminants need to be a discussion topic next year.
- Application criteria for emergency services- households are being rejected for drought services applications. Michael Prado- The county has a population limit for interim water. Cutler is unincorporated and severely disadvantaged but has a population of over 6,000 people.

Water Boards Next Steps:

- Bring a follow up discussion on domestic wells/state smalls at a future meeting.
- Bring a follow up discussion about point of use and point of entry filtration devices along with East Potterville case study.
- Provide more information on consolidations.
- Provide a tribal water system overview.

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

Isabel Solorio (P)	Cástulo Estrada (A)	Silverio Pérez Chavarin (P)
Martha Curiel (A)	Ileana Miranda (P)	Sarah Rutherford (A)
Chelsea Hsin-Feng Tu (P)	Tonya Moreno (A)	Don James (P)
Soren Nelson (P)	Edwin Alonzo (P)	Erick Orellana (P)
Eva Dominguez (P)	James Sullivan (P)	Kristin Dobbin (P)
Michael Prado Sr. (P)	Rami Kahlon (P)	Stephanie Anognason (P)
Rob Burroughs (P)	Shannon Murphy (P)	

State Water Board Attendance

Division of Drinking Water: Andrew Altevogt, Jeff Wetzel, Chad Fischer, Krysten Abhold

Office of Financial Assistance: Chad Fischer

Office of Public Engagement, Equity and Tribal Affairs: Adriana Renteria, Mandy Roman, Amelia Nishimura, Michael Ben Ortiz, Amy Kronson

Office of Chief Counsel: Anthony Austin