

SAFER Drinking Water Advisory Group Meeting #3

Meeting Notes | July 11, 2024

Overview

The Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Advisory Group participated in a meeting to discuss the SAFER program goals, the draft Fiscal Year 2024-25 Fund Expenditure Plan (FEP), and the summary of Technical Assistance efforts. Staff shared updates on the SAFER Advisory Group Application process and upcoming SAFER related events.

SAFER Program Goals

The State Water Board redefined the SAFER program goals for the next 5 years of the program. Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel shared the accomplishments of the SAFER program, followed by a Division of Drinking Water presentation about the new goals and metrics. Feedback received:

- Need to streamline the funding application process for technical assistance providers to accelerate solutions.
- Concerns about SAFER program ability to fund consolidations and the number of consolidations beyond the 10-year program.
- Concern that the SAFER goals did not address domestic wells.
- Concerns about financial support to consolidate systems that are failing with the new Hex Chrome Maximum Level Contaminants.
- Add number of residents receiving interim supplies under Goal 1 metrics.
- Add number of domestic wells working towards long-term solutions under Goal 2 metrics.
- Provide financial assistance to systems which became out of compliance with new maximum level contaminants.
- Concerns for lack of funding to address domestic well contamination.

Draft Fiscal Year 2024-25 Fund Expenditure Plan

The Division of Financial Assistance presented the draft Fund Expenditure Plan for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 with details on the available funding, priorities, and targets. The SAFER Advisory Group members provided the following feedback:

- Request Water Board to provide guidance on how the following programs interact and overlap:
 - Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)
 - SAFER
 - Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-term Sustainability (CV-Salts)
- Shorten grant application process time.
- Suggestion to let technical assistance providers make project recommendations on a case-by-case basis.
- Provide planning and sampling support to domestic wells and state small water systems.
- Recurring concern about domestic well owners' solutions specifically for owners that do not meet the low-income criteria but cannot afford drinking water solutions.

Summary of Technical Assistance Efforts

Based on the SAFER Advisory Group request, the Division of Financial Assistance provided an overview of technical assistance efforts. A panel of technical assistance providers including GHD, Sacramento State Office of Water Programs, Self-Help Enterprises, and Rural Community Assistance Corp, joined the meeting to present their work and discuss it with the members.

The SAFER Advisory Group members valued learning about technical assistance provider's contributions to disadvantaged communities and requested to have a recurring technical assistance efforts update.

AG Announcements

- No announcements.

Public Comments

- **Angela Islas, Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)** project manager, recommended the following:
 - Explore governance of small state water systems and add a metric on this issue in the SAFER program goals.
 - Clarify State Water Board programs overlap with SAFER (e.g. SGMA).
 - Prioritize planning on domestic wells consolidation.
 - Include climate resiliency tools to technical assistance packages.

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

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

State Water Board Attendance

Board: Joaquin Esquivel, Laurel Firestone

Division of Drinking Water: Chad Fischer

Division of Financial Assistance: Dat Tran, Jeff Wetzel, Matt Pavelchik, Zoe Wu

Office of Public Participation: Adriana Renteria, Caroline Pradeau Fonseca, Julia Glick, Michael Ben Ortiz, Rachel Wittenberg

Office of Chief Counsel: Anthony Austin