



Media Release

State Water Board launches 10-year effort to improve access to healthy drinking water

July 7, 2020

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SACRAMENTO – Moving ahead with an ambitious 10-year commitment to bring vulnerable Californian communities access to safe and affordable drinking water, the State Water Resources Control Board approved today the [2020-21 Fund Expenditure Plan](#) that prioritizes up to \$130 million to numerous projects over the next 12 months.

The Board action will allow the [SAFER](#) (Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience) Program to undertake several initiatives to ensure safe and reliable drinking water across the state. These funds will address community and school water systems that are out of compliance with health standards, assist disadvantaged communities throughout the state that lack access to safe drinking water, tackle contaminated private wells and state small water systems, and accelerate consolidations for water systems that are at-risk of failing to provide safe drinking water and out of compliance for contaminants and other water quality issues.

“Ensuring all Californians have access to clean, safe and affordable drinking water is a generational challenge,” said E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair of the State Water Board. “This first year’s adoption of the fund’s annual expenditure plan is a key milestone, with much work ahead. We’re fortunate for the continued collaboration and opportunity to bring these long-needed resources to communities and water systems struggling to provide safe drinking water in California.”

Within days of taking office last year, Gov. Gavin Newsom outlined a vision to ensure all Californians have access to safe, clean and affordable water and pledged to remedy longstanding access issues over the coming decade. The State Water Board is charged with implementing that vision and shepherding it from start to finish.

Assisted by the 19-member [SAFER Advisory Group](#) composed of stakeholders and community members, the State Water Board is preparing a comprehensive needs analysis and establishing project priorities. The Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund was established as part of Senate Bill 200, [signed into law in July 2019](#). The fund provides up to \$130 million per year to assist struggling water systems sustainably and affordably provide safe drinking water to their customers. On May 5, the Board [adopted a Policy](#) that guides how this fund is administered.





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The fund complements the State Water Board's existing suite of financial assistance programs, generally limited to addressing capital infrastructure. It widens the net for entities and types of projects eligible for funding. This includes building local technical and managerial capacity, consolidating small systems to achieve economies of scale, and supporting critical operations and maintenance functions.

To learn more about the [SAFER program](#), a [website has been established](#) that is updated regularly. To learn more about the Policy and Plan, a [fact sheet](#) provides greater detail.

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