



Media Release

State-funded treatment plant will ensure drinking water for disadvantaged Merced County community

Facility will create safe water supply for about 7,500 people

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Contact: [Dimitri Stanich](#), Information Officer

DOS PALOS, CA – Having secured a \$45 million grant from the State Water Resources Board’s [Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience \(SAFER\) drinking water program](#), the severely disadvantaged community of Dos Palos recently broke ground on a new facility that will create a safe, affordable and reliable drinking water supply for approximately 7,500 people.

Expected to be complete by December 2025, the new plant will use two filtration systems to treat water piped in from the California Aqueduct, over 20 miles away. The facility will treat 4 million gallons of surface water per day to drinking water standards. The plant’s design includes solar panels to reduce operational costs and space for a third filtration system that could treat an additional 2 million gallons per day in the future.

“Investment in medium-sized water systems in rural communities like Dos Palos is necessary to make them sustainable for the future,” said Darrin Polhemus, deputy director for the Division of Drinking Water. “Upgrading infrastructure to modern standards helps disadvantaged communities improve efficiency, reduce costs and create trust in the quality and availability of their drinking water supplies.”

The SAFER grant fully funds the costs of project design and construction for the facility, which will replace a failing water treatment plant that has had multiple water outages and regularly exceeds [disinfection byproduct maximum contaminant levels](#).

“This project would not have happened without the grant from the State Water Board’s SAFER program,” said Dos Palos City Manager Dewayne Jones. “When completed, the facility will benefit our community for generations, providing confidence in the security of our homes and protecting the health of our entire town with a reliable and resilient source of water.”

Since the SAFER drinking water program began in 2019, the board has provided nearly \$59 million to 18 projects across Merced County alone, benefiting almost 53,000 people.



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



The SAFER program, established after Gov. Gavin Newsom signed [SB 200](#) in 2019, uses a set of tools, funding sources and regulatory authorities to help struggling water systems provide safe and affordable drinking water and fulfill the [Human Right to Water](#). SAFER is driven by collective responsibility: water systems, nonprofit organizations, governments, a community advisory board and other stakeholders work together to develop and implement sustainable drinking water solutions.

[More information](#) about the SAFER program 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 resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.



The SAFER 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.