

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, RACIAL EQUITY, AND TRIBAL AFFAIRS PROJECT UPDATES

Consistent with Resolutions [R3-2017-0004](#)<sup>1</sup> and [R3-2023-0002](#)<sup>2</sup>, Central Coast Water Board staff prioritize and leverage limited resources to advance environmental justice projects in the Central Coast region. To increase transparency and provide opportunities for community and tribal engagement, the Central Coast Water Board developed a [Project Tracker](#) which includes a list of active projects that may be of increased interest to underrepresented communities.

This attachment also includes more detailed updates for specific projects including the Tribal Beneficial Uses Project, Bolsa Knolls Septic to Sewer Project, Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program, Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program, and Central Coast Community-Based Water Quality Grants Program.

### **Tribal Beneficial Uses Project**

Racial Equity Resolution No. R3-2023-0002 directs staff to prioritize the process to adopt Tribal Beneficial Use (TBU) definitions, including Tribal Tradition and Culture (CUL), Tribal Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB), and Subsistence Fishing (SUB) Beneficial Uses into the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin (Basin Plan). Basin Planning staff are working to adopt the TBU definitions into the Basin Plan in early 2024. Central Coast Water Board staff is conducting additional, focused outreach to Tribes to build relationships, prior to Central Coast Water Board consideration of adoption. In October 2023, staff attended the Annual Tribal Environmental Protection Agency and United States EPA (USEPA) Conference put on by tribal environmental professionals and USEPA experts in water quality for the Pacific Southwest Region. In summer 2024, staff are planning to release for public comment a proposed amendment to the Basin Plan to incorporate the State Water Resources Control Board's Tribal Beneficial Uses (TBUs). As part of this effort, from March to October 2023, staff held seven virtual informal outreach meetings with interested tribal representatives to build relationships and develop open lines of communication. The TBU designation of waterbodies, and corresponding outreach to representatives of California Native American Tribes in the Central Coast region is prioritized for the coming years.

*Resources and Funding:* The Central Coast Water Board has one technical staff working in the Basin Planning Program but does not have any dedicated funding for tribal engagement or TBU projects. Staff is working with the State Water Board to develop a scope of work for discretionary funds that may support the evaluation of TBUs in the Central Coast region.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/2017/2017-0004\\_hrtw\\_fnl.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2017/2017-0004_hrtw_fnl.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/press\\_room/press\\_releases/docs/2023/r3-2023-0002.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/press_room/press_releases/docs/2023/r3-2023-0002.pdf)

### **Bolsa Knolls Septic to Sewer Project**

The Wastewater Consolidation (WWC) Program's objective is to eliminate contamination, pollution, nuisance conditions, and threats to beneficial uses from inadequately maintained and failing onsite sewage treatment systems (e.g., septic systems) by facilitating consolidation with existing sewer infrastructure. The WWC Program has prioritized its outreach efforts to disadvantaged communities served by one or more failing or inadequate onsite sewage treatment systems that are near a properly operated and permitted sewer system, such as the community of Bolsa Knolls.

Central Coast Water Board staff is coordinating with several local agencies and environmental justice groups including the city of Salinas, Monterey County, Monterey One Water, Community Water Center, and Rural Community Assistance Corp (RCAC) to discuss wastewater solutions for the Bolsa Knolls community. Staff is planning a community listening session with the goal of developing relationships in the community, understanding community wastewater concerns, and evaluating consolidation as a potential wastewater solution. For more information on the WWC Program or the Bolsa Knolls Septic to Sewer Project, review the [August 2023 staff report](#)<sup>3</sup> or the [Wastewater Consolidation Program webpage](#)<sup>4</sup>.

*Resources and Funding:* The Central Coast Water Board has two technical staff working in the WWC Program.

### **Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program**

In coordination with the Bay Foundation of Morro Bay (Bay Foundation), the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring and Assessment Program (CCAMP-GAP) implements the [Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program](#)<sup>5</sup> which provides free drinking water well testing for domestic wells and small water systems<sup>6</sup>. The program began in October 2018 and, as of December 5, 2023, has tested 524 wells. The program has collected well samples throughout the region although, 75% of the samples have been collected in San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties. The program is implemented in close coordination with local agencies and community partners and prioritizes drinking water well testing in underrepresented communities. Test results are provided to drinking water well users in English and Spanish, along with resources related to safe drinking water and well treatment. Program results indicate that approximately 48% of the drinking water wells tested have at least one exceedance of a Primary Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for safe drinking water. The most common drinking water contaminants are nitrate, chromium VI, and arsenic. Well sampling test results are

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board\\_info/agendas/2023/aug/Item10\\_sfrpt.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_info/agendas/2023/aug/Item10_sfrpt.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water\\_issues/programs/wastewater\\_consolidation/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/wastewater_consolidation/)

<sup>5</sup> [www.centralcoastwelltesting.org](http://www.centralcoastwelltesting.org)

<sup>6</sup> Defined as either a local small water system with two to four residential connections, or a state small water system with five to 14 residential connections.

uploaded directly to [GeoTracker](#)<sup>7</sup> and data is available to local environmental health agencies and the public via [GAMA GIS](#)<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, program participants with wells that do not meet safe drinking water standards are referred to the Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program, implemented by the [Community Water Center](#)<sup>9</sup>. Of the 48% of drinking water wells tested that have at least one MCL exceedance, 41% of those have resulted in low-income households receiving drinking water through a bottled water delivery service.

In March 2023, the Bay Foundation of Morro Bay (Bay Foundation) executed a new contract with Tetra Tech Inc. to continue the program for approximately three years. Tetra Tech Inc. conducts intake screening of participants, scheduling, sample collection, and transmittal of results. Under the new contract, Tetra Tech Inc. subcontracts with Eurofins laboratory to conduct the well sampling analysis. Eurofins analyzes each well sample for eighteen (18) separate parameters.<sup>10</sup> These parameters are unchanged from the previous contract. The next phases of drinking water well testing are planned for Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara Counties. Interested parties can learn more about the program by calling 1 (844) 613-5152 (English / Spanish) or by visiting the following websites: [Central Coast Well Testing \(www.centralcoastwelltesting.org\)](#) and [Costa Central Analisis De Pozos \(http://www.ccanalisisdepozos.org\)](#).

*Resources and Funding:* The Central Coast Water Board dedicates one technical specialist position to manage CCAMP-GAP. As described in Resolution R3-2022-0015, the Central Coast Water Board allocated settlement funds for the Bay Foundation to continue free well testing services in the Central Coast region in the long term.

### **Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program**

The [Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program](#)<sup>11</sup> provides an immediate source of safe drinking water through a bottled water delivery service program for eligible low-income households whose drinking water wells do not meet safe drinking water standards. The Community Water Center (CWC) implements the program with grant funds from the State Water Board's [Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program](#)<sup>12</sup> (SAFER). CWC identifies potential program participants through the Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program, as well as through active community outreach and engagement. The program started in October 2019 and as of December 31, 2023, a total of 266 households in the Central Coast Region are enrolled in the program, primarily in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties. The program has resulted in the delivery of approximately 334,809 gallons of replacement

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<sup>7</sup> <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/> GeoTracker is the Water Boards' data management system for sites that impact, or have the potential to impact, water quality in California, with emphasis on groundwater.

<sup>8</sup> Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment Groundwater Information System (GAMA GIS) <https://gamagroundwater.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/gamamap/public/Default.asp>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.communitywatercenter.org/>

<sup>10</sup> The list of [eighteen parameters](#) is included as part of the program website's FAQs page.

<sup>11</sup> <https://sites.google.com/communitywatercenter.org/central-coast-regional-bottled/home?authuser=0>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/safer/>

drinking water. Access to this water fills a critical need for low-income households in the Central Coast Region. CWC has also provided outreach and facilitated the testing of drinking water wells in high priority areas. For more information about the Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program, please contact:

Shirley Robles at (831) 500-2677 or [shirley.robles@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:shirley.robles@communitywatercenter.org)  
Pedro Enriquez at (831) 809-7367 or [pedro.enriquez@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:pedro.enriquez@communitywatercenter.org)  
Mayra Hernandez at (831) 500-2125 or [mayra.hernandez@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:mayra.hernandez@communitywatercenter.org)  
Brandon Bollinger at (831) 500-2162 or [brandon.bollinger@communitywatercenter.org](mailto:brandon.bollinger@communitywatercenter.org)

*Resources and Funding:* Funding for the Central Coast Regional Bottled Water Program is provided by a \$3.9 million SAFER grant to CWC which ends in June 2026, and includes funding to continue the 123-TCP Point-of-Entry Treatment Pilot Project, previously funded by a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP). The Central Coast Water Board does not have any dedicated staff resources to support the bottled water program.

### **Central Coast Community-Based Water Quality Grants Program**

As described in Resolution [R3-2022-0015](#)<sup>13</sup>, the Central Coast Water Board allocated \$1.2 million of PG&E settlement funds to the [Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment](#)<sup>14</sup> (Rose Foundation) to develop a [Central Coast Community-Based Water Quality Grants Program](#)<sup>15</sup>. The grant program is intended to support large and small projects that: 1) address the human right to water, 2) address environmental justice issues, 3) provide water quality benefits to underrepresented communities, 4) implement climate change mitigation or climate change adaptation strategies, 5) develop or implement activities to achieve sustainable water supplies, or 6) implement water quality monitoring and assessment projects. The Rose Foundation will convene a third-party Funding Advisory Board to be made up of individuals with knowledge of the Central Coast region's watersheds, groundwater basins, and priority water quality issues to assist with proposal evaluation. Additionally, the Rose Foundation will utilize specific [project ranking and selection criteria](#)<sup>16</sup> during the grant proposal review process. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, but eligible projects not recommended for funding may be placed on a list for potential future consideration. The grant program will also offer capacity assessments and technical assistance mini-grants targeted towards smaller grantees to help organizations build capacity in specific areas. On December 11, 2023, the Bay Foundation and Rose Foundation executed the contract establishing the Central Coast Community-Based Water Quality Grants Program. The grant program's solicitation for grant proposals is anticipated for the first half of 2024. For more information about the Central Coast Community-Based Water Quality Grants Program, please contact the Rose Foundation at (510) 658-0702 or [rose@rosefdn.org](mailto:rose@rosefdn.org)

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<sup>13</sup> [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/2022/r3-2022-0015.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/board_decisions/adopted_orders/2022/r3-2022-0015.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://rosefdn.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://rosefdn.org/central-coast-community-based-water-quality-grants-program/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://rosefdn.org/wp-content/uploads/item12\\_att2.pdf](https://rosefdn.org/wp-content/uploads/item12_att2.pdf)

*Resources and Funding:* The Central Coast Water Board allocated \$1.2 million to the Rose Foundation to implement the Community Based Water Quality Grants Program in Resolution No. R3-2022-0015.