

SAFER Drinking Water Advisory Group Meeting #1

Meeting Notes | March 13, 2025

Overview

The Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Advisory Group participated in the first Advisory Group meeting of the year. The presentations included an overview of the Advisory Group member onboarding materials, community partner pilot effort, point of use/point of entry pilot effort, and Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience program updates and announcements.

State Water Board Overview

Water Boards staff offered a brief overview of the organization's mission, supplemented by educational videos highlighting the history of the Water Boards and the structure of water systems.

- Advisory Group members expressed interest and recommended receiving a presentation on surface and ground water rights.
- Advisory Group members inquired about the transition of the Division of Drinking Water to State Water Board from the Department of Public Health.
 - Staff provided an overview on the motivation and benefits of the transition of Division of Drinking Water from the Dept. of Public Health to the State Water Board.
 - Staff also shared a link to a video on the State Water Boards website that speaks to the history of California water landscape as resource to understand the transfer.
 - English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPT1EeKs8vU>
 - Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBVZwF9d38>

Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Drinking Water Program Advisory Group Overview

Water Boards staff provided an overview of the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Drinking Water Program, explaining why the program is needed and addressing the significant water challenges faced by various communities. Staff introduced the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Advisory Group, outlining its key roles and responsibilities.

- Advisory Group members inquired about the differences between the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Intended Use Plan, and the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program Fund Expenditure Plan.
 - Staff explained that the fund expenditure plan is intended to identify Public Water Systems, state smalls, and regions where domestic wells consistently fail or are at risk of failing to provide safe drinking water and appropriate remedies.
 - 1) The Fund Expenditure Plan helps to identify sources of funding for projects
 - 2) The Fund Expenditure Plan also explains what types of projects will be prioritized and why they are prioritized using data gathered by the board.
 - 3) Staff also informed Advisory Group members that the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience- Fund Expenditure Plan is what Advisory Group members will have the opportunity to provide feedback on. Their

feedback will be used to help maintain alignment and consistency with the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and Intended Use Plan.

- Staff explained that one of the key differences between the Fund Expenditure Plan and Intended Use Plan is that the Intended Use Plan is funded primarily by grants, state bonds, repayments of Drinking Water State Revolving Fund principal and interest on loans, and other various loan sources.
- Advisory Group member inquired about how the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program and the Water Board define a failing water system.
 - A primary contaminant is a health-based regulation on drinking water quality.
 - A secondary contaminant affects the aesthetics of water. Mostly color, smell, etc.
 - Considerations for identifying a system as failing include but are not limited to: exceedance of contaminant thresholds, technique treatment violations, monitoring violations and reporting violations.
 - The Water Board is actively trying to develop tools to provide more information regarding at risk domestic wells and state small water systems.
 - Advisory Group member provided a link to the current failing criteria for public water systems:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/docs/hr2w_expanded_criteria.p
- Advisory Group member emphasizes the need to streamline the process of consolidations and for State Water Boards to be more involved.
 - Annexation and consolidation projects require a lot of resources.
 - Up until recently it was only for failing water systems and now it includes at risk systems.
 - It would be helpful to develop a document/report to summarize lessons learned from various projects implemented across the state of California.
 - Additional links provided by Advisory Group member:
 - Local Area Formation Commission and Consolidations report:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CDb2uo9ckSpgIMXUAkuPLEOectlVWDF/view>
 - Lessons from Consolidation (English):
https://drive.google.com/file/d/16HoM57Svw1-m49BlmIlmnU6L8xE1T_9x/view
 - Lessons from Consolidations (SPAN) [Qué significaría la consolidación para mi comunidad? - Espanol.pdf - Google Drive](#)
 - Community Guide to Designing Consolidations:
<https://innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Designing-Water-System-Consolidation-Projects.pdf>

Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Community Partner Pilot Effort

Water Board staff delivered a presentation on the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Community Partner Pilot effort, covering its inspiration, goals, and the roles of community and funding partners. The presentation highlighted how community partners complement existing efforts and provided an overview of the pilot's purpose. Staff also discussed the next steps for moving the initiative forward.

- Advisory Group member inquired about the difference between funding partners and community partners.
 - Staff clarified that a funding partner is a Technical Assistance provider that already has a contract with the state and a community partner can be nonprofits OR residents that are not part of a 501c3 (non-profit) and would not be able to hold a grant directly with the state.
 - Comités can be community partners.
- Pilot effort is entering the recruitment phase right now and funding partners are handling the recruitment efforts.
- Advisory Group member shared concerns about sustainability and encourages the board to make a plan for continuity when the funding ends.

Point of Use/ Point of Entry (POU / POE) Pilot Effort

The Division of Drinking Water presented the Point of Use / Point of Entry pilot effort, highlighting installation types, challenges, and recommendations. Key milestones included developing an educational strategy, creating and piloting materials with the community, and presenting the approach to partners, along with lessons learned.

- Advisory Group member appreciated starting Point of Use discussions with a focus on equity—equity on this topic is not just talking about intra community equity but also inter community equity.
- There is interest in learning more about what the equity analysis will include and how equity will be defined. Water Board staff are open to feedback and suggestions.

Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Drinking Water Program Updates and Announcements

The Division of Financial Assistance presented the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience Program accomplishments in 2024 and Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience goals, priorities, and progress made to date.

- Since 2019, the failing criteria has expanded to include most notably water outage and shortage.
- A list of water systems currently not yet receiving support will be shared by staff. It's important to note that water systems may be receiving funding from various sources.
- There is a need for additional data that can accurately reflect where domestic wells are located, as well as which are operating with/without a permit.

Advisory Group Member Announcements

- **Juan Cano, Self-Help Enterprises-** Currently working on a full consolidation project with Riverdale Park Tract and City of Modesto. Services are being extended to each resident in Riverdale Park Tract to become customers of City of Modesto. Construction will begin once the bidding process is complete.
- **Angela Islas, Central California Environmental Network-** Central California Environmental Network is working with West Fresno County (under Perrin Colony) as a community partner to continue engagement around discussions on consolidation with Raisin City. They are also in

discussions about developing a feasibility study for the community to look into consolidating with Raisin City's water system.

- **Michael Knight, Porterville-** Porterville has been very involved in consolidation project to provide safe drinking water to its residents. They are still working on reviewing capacity for serving East Porterville project and going out for bid by the end of the year. Porterville is also currently entering in a funding agreement for consolidating Del Oro Water Systems (two currently under compliance order).
- **Parry Klassen, Valley Water Collaborative** – Valley Water Collaborative obtained a Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience grant to add additional contaminants to the well testing program; it has been done for 3 years under Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience support. Valley Water has expanded to four additional counties, for a total of five counties. They began the testing programs with them two weeks ago to test for nitrate; they launched the program and in 10 days they received over 200 applications and look forward to completing applications and water testing in the next couple of weeks. If there's nitrates and another contaminant Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience splits that with them. They have roughly 2-3000 wells in those basins.

Public Comment

- **Arthine Cossey Van Duyne-** With regards to Point of Use/Point of Entry, are you considering alternate source water opportunities like Atmospheric Water Harvesting (AWH)? Could WRT Bottled Water Distribution be used in the interim? Are there alternatives for sources water for community scale storage/distribution? E.g. Potable water trucked in.
- **Osvaldo Macias, Nuestra Casa-** East Palo Alto has three water systems, and one is failing in the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience dashboard. The failing system serves a "severely disadvantaged community," yet I am not aware of any cooperation with the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience staff for financial support to support the system and the residents it serves. The community of East Palo Alto would appreciate further communication and support on the matter as soon as possible to ensure that residents have access to clean safe and affordable water.
- **Chelsea Spier, CA DWR** - the Dept. of Conservation's multi-benefit land use grant had included provisions to allow for food at meetings, childcare, and transportation. Would provisions like these, to help get people to participate in meetings, be something possible through this program?

Water Board Next Steps

- Next Meeting tentatively set for June 26, 2025

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

Norma I. Amezcua (P)	Angela Islas (P)	Edwin Alonzo (A)
Juan Cano (P)	Parry Klassen (P)	Stephanie Anognason (P)
Irene Cacho (P)	Michael Knight (P)	Don James (P)
Kristin Dobbin (P)	Erick Orellana (P)	Rami Kahlon (P)
Tequita Jefferson (P)		
Soren Nelso		
Silverio Pérez (A)	James Sullivan (P)	

State Water Board Attendance

Division of Drinking Water: Chad Fischer

Office of Financial Assistance: Jeff Wetzel, Krystin Abhold

Office of Public Engagement, Equity and Tribal Affairs: Adriana Renteria, Amelia Nishimura, Manuel Leon, Alma López, Mandy Roman

Office of Chief Counsel: Anthony Austin