



Media Release

State Water Board Grant and Loan Funds Arvin Project to Resolve Arsenic Contamination in Drinking Water

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ARVIN – The Arvin Community Services District broke ground today on a \$14.3 million project to resolve arsenic contamination problems in the district’s drinking water. Once completed, the project will provide a safe, reliable and permanent supply of drinking water to a community that has lacked access to it for more than a decade.

The project is funded with a grant along with a zero-interest loan from the State Water Board’s [Division of Financial Assistance](#). It is expected to be completed within two years.

“This project is part of the effort to meet the state mandate for clean, safe and affordable water as a human right,” said State Water Board Member Laurel Firestone. “The burden of contaminated drinking water falls heavily on disadvantaged communities like Arvin that can least afford to fix the problem. The State Water Board is working hard to find funding and solutions for those communities.”

The City of Arvin is severely disadvantaged, with a median household income of less than 60 percent of the state average and a disproportionate burden of environmental problems, including poor air quality. The district serves a population of 20,850 with 3,776 connections, and has a medium household income of \$33,198 and is in a rural part of Kern County, 15 miles southeast of Bakersfield.

All six of the district’s supply wells have naturally occurring arsenic concentrations above state accepted limits, and the district has been under a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency order since 2008 for failure to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Long-term exposure to high levels of inorganic arsenic in drinking water has been associated with skin disorders and increased risks for diabetes, high blood pressure and several types of cancer.

As an interim measure to ensure safe drinking water, Arvin CSD installed 118 filtration treatment systems in water fountains at community sites such as schools, parks and libraries. At the sites, people can fill smaller containers, like water bottles. Three large centralized filling stations located at the Arvin CSD’s offices allow residents to fill up to five-gallon containers. Funding for this \$568,000 interim solution came from the State Water Board’s Cleanup and Abatement Program.



The first phase of the current project, completed in 2016, was funded with a \$4.5 million grant from the State Water Board through Proposition 84. The Arvin CSD provided the remaining \$275,000 in funding for the project, which included drilling two new wells that meet the state's arsenic limits, to replace two of the existing wells.

The second phase, which broke ground today, will include developing three new municipal water wells that meet state standards for arsenic, along with the equipment and pipelines to connect them to the existing distribution system. A one-million-gallon steel storage tank and booster pumping plant at one of the existing wells will also be a part of the project.

As part of the conditions of the State Water Board's financing agreement, Arvin CSD is required to establish and maintain water rates necessary to cover operations and maintenance costs. The operating and maintenance costs for this project would be similar to the current operating and maintenance costs of the District and would not result in the increase of water rates to current customers.

The second phase also provides funding to abandon and destroy five of the contaminated wells. The U.S. EPA will provide funding to replace the sixth well, through the Superfund program.

State Water Board funding for the second phase of the project includes a \$5 million grant and a \$9.3 million loan at zero interest, from the [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#).

The project is expected to be completed by March 31, 2021.

Background:

Arvin is one of more than 300 communities across the state that lack access to safe drinking water. Overall, upwards of 1 million people lack access to safe drinking water in California. The State Water Board maintains a list and map of communities that lack safe drinking water on its [Human Right to Water portal](#).

Since 2010, the state has provided over \$3 billion, primarily bond funds and federal funds, in assistance to address safe and affordable drinking water needs, such as the repair, replacement, and improvement of aging infrastructure and new treatment systems for over 600 projects to comply with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

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