



**Cal OES**  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES



## **East Porterville Emergency Water Project October 2016**

California's five-year drought has created hardship across the state, but nowhere have impacts been more severe than in Tulare County, often called "ground zero" of the drought. From the beginning of Water Year 2012 through April 2016, the Tulare Basin received just 56 percent of its average annual rainfall over the past 50 years. Private wells that were the only source of water for hundreds of East Porterville homes are dry due to the drought, and wells that can still draw water are likely below drinking water standards due to groundwater nitrates contamination.

Several State agencies are working with Tulare County local governments on an emergency water supply project to provide drinking water to homes in East Porterville, an unincorporated community where numerous private water wells are not usable because they either are contaminated or have gone dry during California's drought. Homes without a sustainable supply of safe drinking water have received water deliveries under an emergency Household Tank Program since 2014. A new water distribution system is being designed that will connect East Porterville residences without usable water to a City of Porterville well with existing water distribution lines for some residences or new pipes that will be laid along East Porterville streets. Approximately 1,100 eligible properties can benefit from this permanent water solution and eventually annex to the City of Porterville, with the State paying connection costs for homes whose owners agree at the outset of the project to the terms and conditions of an Extraterritorial Service Agreement. If eligible property owners agree, the project can begin connecting 300 homes this year and the remaining residences by the end of 2017. Three State agencies -- the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) -- are working collaboratively along with local government to ensure a water conveyance system is in place to serve residents currently without safe and reliable drinking water.

### **State's Emergency Response**

Cal OES has funded a Tulare County program to deliver emergency water to affected homes through the Household Tank Program since 2014 at a monthly cost of more than \$650,000. Although volunteers and non-governmental agencies also responded to the crisis by delivering bottled water to residents, a permanent solution is required to ensure that East Porterville residents have a sustainable supply of drinkable water at reasonable cost. DWR drilled a new well for the City of Porterville in fall 2015 to ensure the availability of water for the additional homes that will be added to the Porterville Water System. In December 2015, the SWRCB adopted a resolution that provides up to \$5 million to non-profit organizations to assist private well owners with permanent solutions for drought-related drinking water emergencies.

## **Project Schedule**

State, county and local nonprofit agencies began a coordinated effort with property owners in May 2016 to begin the first stage of the project. Up to 70 homes in East Porterville are expected to hook into existing water distribution lines owned by the City of Porterville by fall 2016.

DWR has contracted with GEI, a consulting company, to expedite the placement of a transmission line along East Porterville streets to ensure a water delivery capability in the unincorporated area. Construction will begin in October 2016 and is expected to be completed by December 31, 2016. The first homes to be connected to this transmission line will be ones that currently are without a water supply and are receiving weekly water deliveries through OES or to properties with a reported dry well who have completed their Extraterritorial Service Agreement. The remaining homes with contaminated wells are eligible for connection to the new system by the end of 2017.

## **No Up-Front Costs to Homeowners**

The City of Porterville has enacted an ordinance that requires eligible property owners who wish to hook into the City's distribution system to sign a consent form and agree to annexation of their property to the City in the future. Connection costs for each parcel are estimated to be at least \$10,000. Homeowners will incur no costs for connecting to the new water system by agreeing now to do so at the project's start and are in agreement with their property being annexed to the City of Porterville under the terms of the Extraterritorial Service Agreement. Deliveries of potable water in water tanks will cease once residents are hooked up to the public water system. Residents that currently have an emergency water tank installed and choose not to connect to the City of Porterville system will have those tanks removed by Tulare County. The County will notify those residents of the date the tank will be removed. Commercial properties will incur the fee. Once connected to the new water system, property owners and/or renters will be billed for water deliveries based on metering of their service at the City effective rate.

## **Information**

DWR contacts:

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*These are general statements for informational purposes only. They do not express a legal opinion or legal advice to any party and should not be considered as definitive or conclusive. Because your property's setting and circumstances are unique to you, we strongly advise consulting with any applicable agency – including the city and county where your property is located – and legal counsel to ensure you receive proper, adequate and specific information germane to your property and circumstances.*