

MEETING SUMMARY

County of Monterey Drought Advisory Group

Meeting 3

Thursday, January 9, 2025; 9:30 AM – 11:45 AM

In-Person: 1270 Natividad Road, Whitney Room B & C, Salinas, CA 93906

On-line: Zoom

Participants

Name	Drought Advisory Group Membership	Organization
In-Person Participation		
Valerie Brown-Klingelhoefner	Member	Arroyo Seco Citizens Association
Brandon Bollinger	Member's Representative	Community Water Center
Ricardo Encarnacion	Member	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Marni Flagg	Member	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Russ Hatch	Member	MCSI Water Systems Management
Casey Meusel	Member	Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency
Judy Vazquez-Varela	Member	Pajaro/ Sunny Mesa Community Service District
Mike Weaver	Member	Local Small Water System member
Curtis Weeks	Member	Arroyo Seco GSA
Horacio Amezcuita	Attendee	San Jerardo Cooperative
Rosa Carrillo	Attendee	San Jerardo Cooperative
Manuel Luz	Attendee	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Sunshine Xiong	Attendee	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Tanya Martinez	Planning Team	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Cheryl Sandoval	Planning Team	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Isaiah Tuazon	Planning Team	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Christie Vo	Planning Team	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Wendy Strimling	Planning Team	County of Monterey Counsel
Online Participation		
Julie Ekstrom	DWR	California Department of Water Resources
Sarah Ko	DWR	California Department of Water Resources
Amanda Peisch-Derby	DWR	California Department of Water Resources
Marla Anderson	Member	State small water system
Aaron Bierman	Member	Consulting Hydrogeologist
Maureen Hamilton	Member	Monterey Peninsula Water Management District
Brian Lockwood	Member	Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency
Monica Martinez	Member	MPWMD
Kjia Rivers	Member	Community Water Center

Kelsey Scanlon	Member	County of Monterey, Department of Emergency Management, Director
Amy Woodrow	Member	Monterey County Water Resources Agency
Karen Pontius	Attendee	County of Monterey, Environmental Health Bureau
Elias Rodriguez	Attendee	California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
Craig Moyle	Planning Team	Stantec
Rina Buck-Macleod	Planning Team	Stantec

Meeting Objectives

Convene the County of Monterey Drought Advisory Group for Small Water Systems and Domestic Wells (Drought Advisory Group) to continue to inform the development of the County of Monterey Drought Resilience Plan. During the meeting, participants were informed on the status of Drought Resilience Plan development and feedback was solicited on the short-term response actions to mitigate impacts during drought/water shortage events and long-term mitigation strategies to reduce the vulnerability to drought/water shortage events.

DRAFT Summary

- Welcome and Introductions – County of Monterey Environmental Health Bureau staff welcomed the group and participants introduced themselves.
- Recap of the Drought Resilience Plan Process and Preliminary Risk Assessment Updates – Stantec staff provided a brief review of the Drought Resilience Plan development process and progress to-date.
- Short-Term Response Actions and Long-Term Mitigation Strategies – County staff provided an overview of the Short-Term Response Actions, which mitigate impacts during drought/water shortage onset and throughout a drought/water shortage event, and Long-Term Mitigation Strategies, which reduce the vulnerability to drought/water shortage events. In advance of the meeting, County staff provided the Draft Monterey County Drought Response Short-Term Response Actions and Long-Term Mitigation Strategies for Drought Advisory Group review via email on December 19, 2024 for Drought Advisory Group review. Feedback provided on the draft Short-Term Response Actions and Long-Term Mitigation Strategies during the meeting is summarized below:
 - Short-Term Response Actions Feedback (Slide 13)
 - Water Supply – Participant comments related to temporary water supplies are summarized as follows:
 - Water Hauling/Bulk Water –Participants discussed potential concerns with the short-term response actions related to water hauling and bulk water. There were questions related to the potential sources of the hauled and bulk water, especially as related to overdrafted basins and associated water quality concerns.
 - Remote Systems – Members discussed that there are some regions where the small water systems/domestic wells would be too far for temporary interties to larger water systems, and that these more remote areas could potentially establish temporary interties to agricultural wells during water shortage events. Additionally, an alternative option could be providing bottled water/hailed water to these more remote locations.
 - Commodity point of distribution (C-POD) for Short-Term Water Needs – The Director of the County of Monterey Department of Emergency Management offered that County has C-POD plans for when an emergency is activated. These plans include a meal distribution, water, personal protective

equipment, educational materials, clean-up kits, etc. It was suggested that the Drought Resilience Plan should include the existing C-POD information for water shortage events (including flooding).

- County Drought and Water Shortage Web Portal – Participants provided comments regarding potential resources to be included on the County web portal, as summarized below:
 - Well Drillers/Bottled Water Supplier – A member suggested the County identify and maintain lists of well drillers and bottled water suppliers on the County web portal.
 - Funding Opportunities – Another member suggested that the web portal include a current list of funding opportunities for domestic wells and small water systems.
 - Water Quality and Treatment – A participants provided that the web portal should include information related to water quality/treatment options for domestic wells and small water systems.
 - County Fact Sheet – A participant recommended that the County develop a fact sheet summarizing water quality/contamination issues and water shortages and share it on the County web portal.
 - Other resources – A member suggested adding links on the web portal for existing relevant plans/reports and County resources.
- Existing Potential Drought Conditions – A member noted that within the Arroyo Seco area the river is currently low and that there are water quality concerns, especially as related to sulfur. It was noted that most of the private wells are less than 20 feet deep, and these wells are now drawing in contaminates that are not typical for the region, using filters at a greater rate, necessitating pumps, and requiring new wells to be dug at a more rapid rate than usual.
- Long-Term Mitigation Strategies Feedback (Slides 14 through 17)
 - Communication and Education – A member expressed that communication between the County and small water systems/domestic wells could be more frequent. A suggestion was provided for quarterly email communication, outlining resources available to small water systems and domestic wells.
 - Well Sounder Loaning Program – A member provided that the County could develop a program to loan well sounders (which cost approximately \$1,200 to \$1,500) to domestic wells and small water systems operators to approximate the depth to water. Participants were supportive of this potential program, noting that depth to water monitoring is invaluable to well owners and operators. Additionally, another member noted that well owners and operators may be more open to doing the readings themselves (using the loaner equipment) versus having an external party metering or monitoring well levels.
 - Central Coast Regional Board Program Commitment – A member suggested that the Drought Resilience Plan include a commitment to coordinating with and participating in the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Coast Water Board) program to develop alternative water sources for communities impacted by nitrates.
 - Consolidation – A participant noted that administration of consolidation/temporary interties process is extremely difficult and suggested that an action could be for the County to administer/streamline the consolidation/temporary intertie process (e.g., streamlined permitting).

- Funding Opportunities – The group stressed the importance and challenges of funding for domestic wells and small water systems. Participants discussed that the County could identify opportunities for funding for small water systems and domestic wells within in the County. Additionally, a member noted that the County could identify funding sources available for County efforts. DWR staff provided the following information related to funding:
 - USDA – The USDA (local office in Salinas) offers Emergency Community Water Assistance grants ([Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants | Rural Development](#)) as well as single family housing programs.
 - County Café Gathering – DWR, in partnership with California State Association of Counties, is convening a series of virtual roundtable-style gatherings for county staff who are responsible for the planning and implementation of SB 552. The January program will review options for technical assistance programs and funding available. While the series is geared towards County staff, others are welcome to join: [California County Café Series – January 29, 2025](#)
- County Assistance/Grant Administration and Strategy – Participants noted that it would be helpful to identify a county staff person to be a resource for domestic well and small water system owners and operators. Participants also discussed the desire for a grants and funding administrator in the County. This county resource would assist with: identifying systems in need of help; identifying and sharing funding opportunities; providing assistance through the application process for obtaining/administering funding/grants; and identifying, applying for, and distributing State-level funding. County staff added that the EHD is currently relies primarily on permit fees, and that there could be opportunities to access more grant funding, which would require Board direction/funding.
- Additional Detail – Participants requested that additional detail be added to the long-term mitigation strategies, including: details on how the County would operate bulk water systems; considerations for how interties would impact the residents (e.g., residents with fixed incomes); how the water level information would be collected and distributed; how to track water quality tracking and groundwater monitoring concerns with GSAs; and identification of data gaps.
- Use of the Long-Term Mitigation Strategies – Planning team members offered that long-term mitigation strategies in the Drought Resilience Plan are intended to provide a range of what the County is currently doing as well as identify long-term opportunities that would be eligible for funding as it becomes available.
- Opportunities Moving Forward – County staff provided a recap of the feedback received and discussed opportunities moving forward, emphasizing the value of the Drought Advisory Group participation in developing the Drought Resilience Plan and presenting the plan to the Board.

Action Items

- Drought Advisory Group members to provide feedback on the Short-Term Actions and Long-Term Mitigation Strategies via email to swsdroughtadvisorygroup@countyofmonterey.gov by the end of the day on Friday, January 31, 2025. Please note, per member feedback, comments may be made public. Additionally, comments are welcome any time throughout this process; providing comments by the end of the comment period allows time for comments to be integrated into the Drought Advisory Group Meeting 4 content.