

The Porterville Recorder

Next phase of EP water project close to beginning

September 7, 2016

By The Recorder Staff

Goal is to hook up 500 homes

Within the next week or two work should begin on extending water lines throughout East Porterville, the major step towards eliminating that community's water problems.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR), which is in charge of the emergency connecting of approximately 400 homes in East Porterville without water, has began setting up a construction office at the National Guard Armory. The vacant lot to the north of the armory will be used by the contractor to store equipment and materials.

Phase 1B is running approximately 11 miles of pipe throughout the unincorporated area which became the poster child of the state's drought. Estimates are some 500 homes and businesses lost their water wells during the past three years.

Phase 1A is the immediate connecting of approximately 70 homes and business which are along existing city water lines. As of last week, about six homes have been connected, but Mike Reed, interim public works director for the city of Porterville, said that pace is picking up.

Reed said there have been 26 services installed in the right-of-way and 53 peoperty owners have established a water account with the city.

Before residents can be connected to the city's water system, they must first sign a consent form, then an Extraterritorial Services Agreement and finally, establish a water account with the city.

Getting people to complete all three steps has been a challenge, but Reed said many people have now set up that water account and can be connected.

Self-Help Enterprises is in charge of running a water line from the water main to the property line, where the city will install the water meter. Then, volunteers will connect the meter to the home and turn on the water and remove the temporary tank that was providing water from those residents. It is planned to have the 70 connections done in the next month or two.

DWR has begun setting up an office in the National Guard building for Phase 1B. Project manager Robert Trang said last week the contract to install the lines has been awarded to Ames Construction, which will do both Phase 1B and 1C, which is the further extension of water lines in East Porterville.

The contract was awarded on Aug. 23, but he said it may be a couple of more weeks before work actually begins.

"Having said this, there is some preliminary work like submittal approvals, getting cultural resources training, clearing staging area, etc before real work can begin," he added.

“They will need to provide a detailed construction schedule so only then will we have a better idea on the timing of their construction activities,” said Trang.

He also said Ames has hired Austin Enterprise (sawcut and asphalt pavement) and Matt-Chlor Inc. (pipe disinfection and chlorination), as subcontractors.

“The successful low bidder for Phase 1D&1E is Teichert Construction. We are in the process of awarding this contract. As far as timing, we expect this contract work to be behind the 1B&1C schedule about two weeks,” he added.

The project calls for the lines to be in place and homes connected by the end of the year.

“The goal is to have 500 homes hooked up by the end of the year. Whether this will happen remains to be seen,” said Trang.

Doug Carlson, a spokesperson for DWR, said they are still a “long ways” from implementing the connections.

The state announced around the first of the year it was coming into Porterville and would pay to connect East Porterville to the city of Porterville’s water system. That plans for the city to get at least one new water well — which has been drilled but not connected — and for the city to provide the water for approximately 1,800 properties. Estimates are the entire project will cost the state in the neighborhood of \$25 million.

The final phase of the project, which will not begin until next year, is providing water connections to all residents. However, hooking up to the city water is voluntary and some residents have indicated they will not hook up and remain on their individual water well.

A community-wide meeting, similar to the one held June 23, to update residents on the project, will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 5. A time and location have not been finalized.