

# VISALIA TIMES-DELTA

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## Waterwise: Drought assistance ending with State funding

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County administrators are recommending the Office of Emergency Services ends three water-assistance programs when state funds dry up.

And Supervisors are likely to follow the recommendation.

“The county needs to get out when the State gets out,” Supervisor Steve Worthley said.

In a presentation earlier this week, county administrators suggested ending the mobile showers and non-potable tank programs. In addition, county administrators said they recommended to keep a moratorium on new household tank program requests and also conclude service with current clients.

The recommendation included ending the programs on June 30 or when state funding runs out.

In the presentation, state officials said usage of the mobile shower service have decreased and the number of households with a permanent solution after reporting a drying well have increased.

Households with permanent solutions are expected to increase a water project in Monson underway and residents near Porterville can connect to the municipal system.

There’s still seemingly need for help. As of Monday, there were 90 reported dried wells and there 468 homes with a household tank.

Worthley said the assistance programs were an option when there was an emergency.

“It was designed to be a temporary measure and the temporary measure is coming to an end in June,” he said. “People didn’t have options. There are options now.”

By March 1, state officials had spent \$ 19 million in responding to the drought. The county spent about \$ 500,000 from the general as a requested match.

That’s the funding that will end by summer.

Earlier this month, Gov. Brown ended the state’s drought emergency status, except for Tulare, Kings, Fresno, and Tuolumne counties. County administrators said the funding will end following Gov. Brown’s announcement.

County administrators said it cost \$ 4.4 million to continue assistance without CDAA assistance. There’s no such county money to spend.

Supervisors said it is time county residents seek solutions to water issues.

“This time, it needs to shift to property owners,” Worthley said.

Supervisor Mike Ennis agreed.

“People need to step up and take responsibility,” he said.

Paul Boyer, Self-Help Enterprise program director, said county administrators should seek to extend the assistance programs.

And the reason is simple.

“We depend on groundwater,” he said.

County administrators said they will continue contacting state officials, seeking to extend the funding.