

THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

State may stretch drought-relief funding

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THE RECORDER

Money will continue for a year

Mark Ghilarducci, director of the California Office of Emergency Services, stated in a letter to Tulare County officials the state will continue to provide some funding for drought relief after June 30.

In a letter dated May 9, Ghilarducci stated, "the state will continue to provide temporary funds for up to a year for the delivery of potable water for existing program participants in order to maintain public health and safety."

The state had indicated earlier this year it was ending funding for the program on June 30, but several counties, including Tulare, appealed that decision arguing several of the efforts to provide an alternative water source will not be completed by June 30. A couple of months ago, Gov. Jerry Brown declared the drought over in California, except for just four counties, including Tulare.

The state has been providing funds for the water tank program which was so heavily used in East Porterville until homes without water there began to be connected to the City of Porterville's water system. Phase II of that project, which is to connect all homes in East Porterville to the city's water system, is expected to begin construction in June. Phase I connected more than 300 homes.

The extension of funding will also be good news for the City of Porterville which has 10 residences on the tank program as well.

Today, supervisors will discuss the funding and how to proceed. Options include terminating the household tank program on June 30; lifting the moratorium on new household tank installations until June 30; or continue to work with governor's office on extending funding.

According to the county staff report, the state's extension of the funding would be for counties and non-profits, such as Self-Help Enterprises which is operating the Tulare County Household Tank program, including refilling the tanks at a cost of approximately \$500 a month per tank. The county may also turn over operation of the tank program entirely to Self-Help.

The State OES director said the extension of the drought relief funding will give time to come up with permanent solutions. Tulare County said in the staff report it has concerns about how to help new reports of wells going dry. The report said while the number of newly dry wells has slowed considerably, there are still a few going dry every week. Officials have said there are still some 450 dry domestic wells in the county on the tank program.

The board will meet at 9 a.m. today in board chambers at 2800 W. Burrel Ave. in Visalia.