

Waterwise: Additional funding needed for drought relief

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Local advocates are calling on Gov. Jerry Brown to make funding available and address the need for clean drinking water in the San Joaquin Valley.

Laurel Firestone, co-executive director of Community Water Center, and Tom Collishaw, Self-Help Enterprise CEO, said Central Valley residents are in need of clean water. According to the State Water Resource Control Board, there are California communities not able to finance long-overdue drinking water solutions.

In some communities, according to the resource board, water has high levels of arsenic for more than 10 years.

“California has been a leader in drinking water, but we have to commit sustained funding if we want to solve the crisis this year,” Firestone said.

Collishaw said the need for clean water must be addressed. And while there’s some progress, Collishaw said families are still in need of immediate help.

“We are pleased that the governor sees the need to address the lingering impacts of the drought on families who are still without running water at home,” Collishaw said. “But having arsenic, nitrate or pesticides flowing from your tap is equally an emergency.

Arsenic, nitrate and disinfectant byproducts are the most common contaminants. Drinking water with this contaminants can cause rashes, miscarriages and even cancer.

Collishaw said other representatives should step in and ensure financing is made available.

“We need state leaders to create a sustainable funding source this year to guarantee every Californian safe water,” he said.

According to the CWC, drought funding remains at \$5 million. But added funds are needed for emergency relief including statewide well replacement, permanent connections to public systems, well abandonment and debt relief.

The CWC said 300 communities and one million California residents are still lacking access to clean water.

Based in the San Joaquin Valley, the CWC seeks to act as a catalyst to find solutions for clean water access through organizing, education, and advocacy.

Self-Help Enterprises, based in Visalia, seeks to bring community development, assisting rural communities to find sources of clean drinking water. Self-Help Enterprises also helps residents in becoming homeowners.

Earlier this year, state administrators recognized there are communities in need of finding a water solution. And the work will continue.

“The Administration is committed to working with the Legislature and stakeholders to address this issue,” according to Brown’s budget.

Waterwise is a news and notes column Reporter Luis Hernandez compiles. Send Waterwise ideas and suggestions to the reporter on twitter [@lfhernanvtd](https://twitter.com/lfhernanvtd).

