

# The Modesto Bee

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## Project underway to bring city water to Monterey Park residents

By Ken Carlson

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A water pump that provides well water for the Monterey Park tract, a residential housing community located in a rural area next to dairies and farmland southwest of Ceres, is seen in 2011

An effort to bring municipal water to residents at Monterey Park tract is about 40 percent completed, an official said.

Crews are trenching on Crows Landing Road for a 5-mile waterline that will connect the rural community of 200 residents with Ceres.

The wind and rain forced a groundbreaking ceremony indoors Tuesday at the Monterey Park community center. An ensemble from Central Valley High School in Ceres played music for the gathering attended by 40 community members and officials from Stanislaus County, Ceres, Monterey Park Tract Community Services District and Self-Help Enterprises.

Monterey Park residents will become water customers of Ceres when the work is completed in May. Besides the water main, the improvements will include a 100,000-gallon storage tank and pump station.

“People are really excited about this,” said Eddie Ocampo, community development specialist for Self-Help Enterprises. “People know they have a clean water system on the horizon.”

The rural community, 6 miles south of Modesto, uses bottled water because of unacceptable nitrates and arsenic levels in two wells. Thanks to a state grant, 24 gallons of water is delivered to each of the 47 households every other week.

Self-Help, a nonprofit community development organization, said it has worked for seven years helping the services district secure funding for a water solution. Experts determined it would cost \$300 a month for residents to pay for well treatment to purify the water. An original plan to sink a new well found the groundwater was not any better.

The \$4.2 million in improvements are funded through a Proposition 84 grant and revolving funds from the State Water Resources Control Board.

The county promised to serve as a co-signer for the community services district in an agreement with Ceres approved a year ago.

Francisco Diaz, district board president, said the project would not be possible without a spirit of generosity among Ceres and county officials.

Later this week, crews laying the waterline will bore under a Turlock Irrigation District canal along the route. After the water main is completed on Crows Landing and Monte Vista Avenue, a process called “ice pigging” will force a cold slurry through the community pipes to clean out deposits, Ocampo said.

It is still uncertain what Ceres water service will cost for residents. Households are currently charged \$67 a month, plus 50 cents for every 1,000 gallons of water.

The city will sell the water for 1 1/2 times the rate charged to Ceres customers, which could push the rates above \$90 a month at Monterey Park. According to Self-Help, additional state funding could be available to prevent the increase.

County Supervisor Jim DeMartini noted the improvements will for the first time provide water for fire protection at the Monterey tract. "It just took a lot of cooperation from the different agencies to get to this point," DeMartini said.