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Kern residents temporarily receive water tanks, pumps, deliveries through state drought program

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By John Cox



Under a state-funded program these 2,600-gallon water storage tanks are being made available temporarily to Kern County residents whose water wells have gone dry because of the drought. Photo courtesy of Community Action Partnership of Kern

More than three dozen people from across Kern County have applied to receive a free water storage tank and electric pump under a state-funded program providing relief for California residents whose wells have gone dry.

The program gives a 2,600-gallon, 9-foot-tall tank to applicants who can demonstrate that their lack of water results not from maintenance problems but because of the drought. The tank and pump are left at qualifying residences and water deliveries are made for up to a year, although six-month extensions may be granted.

While the tank is intended to supply water for things like washing dishes and clothes,

it is not meant to provide drinking water. For that, bottled water is provided initially by the American Red Cross, then on a continuing basis by Sparkletts.

Without the program, the high cost of delivering in bulk to residential areas would put water out of reach for many residents, said Kern County's director of environmental health, Donna Fenton.

"What this does is it gives them 12 months of hauled water," she said.

Paid for by the state Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the Temporary Water Assistance Program is available locally through the cooperation of the nonprofit Community Action Partnership of Kern, Visalia-based community development organization Self-Help Enterprises and the Kern County Department of Public Health Services.

Fenton said applications have come in from diverse areas, including from people living in or around Caliente, Cantil, Glennville, Lake Isabella, Lebec, McFarland, Onyx, Tehachapi and Weldon.

Of at least 39 families or individuals applying for assistance under the program, at least 12 now have tanks, and nine more are scheduled to receive one soon, Fenton reported. She said six applicants now have alternative, permanent solutions that have made state-funded water delivery unnecessary.

Lou Medina, outreach and advocacy manager for CAPK, said news coverage and the organization's nonprofit partners has very successfully spread word about the program. Anyone interested in applying to receive help through the program is asked to call the county at 862-8776.