

The Porterville Recorder

Project begins to hook up homes without water; initial 40 connections will take a month

By The Porterville Recorder Staff

July 5, 2016

Crews with Self-Help Enterprises will begin Tuesday the project to connect approximately 40 homes in East Porterville to city water lines. The project will take about four weeks to complete.

At the June 23 meeting for residents of East Porterville whose wells have gone dry, state officials announced the first phase, actually Phase 1A, would begin July 5.

The plan is to immediately hook up about 40 homes without water which are adjacent to city water lines in East Porterville. In September, the state plans to begin installing water lines throughout East Porterville with the goal to hook up another 425 homes which have no water by the end of the year.

The final phase of the project, which is being paid for entirely by the state, will be to hook up the remaining 1,300 homes in East Porterville. As part of the second phase, approximately 80 homes in the Vandalia Avenue area of the city will be connected as well. That is within city limits, but there are no city water lines there.

Julie Phillips, city Community Development manager, said the work will be done by city workers and Self-Help Enterprises, which will include a contractor and C-SET (Community Services Employment Training).

Jessi Snyder, Self-Help community development specialist, said the first week will be just to identify where the lines will run and they hope to begin putting in the lines by July 11, but it could be later. As of Wednesday, they had not yet signed a contract with a company to install the lines.

"We're still trying to get a contractor under contract. Staking will take a week, then hopefully we'll have a contractor start putting in the lines," Snyder said.

She said the contractor will run the line from the city's water line to the property. The city will then install the meter and backflow valve. She said C-SET crews will then put in the line from the meter to the home. Phillips said once the home is connected, the water will be turned on immediately.

Snyder said there will be two C-SET crews. The first will remove the emergency water tank at the home and the second will connect the home to the water system. She said they hope to do about four homes a day and the entire process should take two or three weeks.

Snyder stressed, as have many others, that residents without water in East Porterville need to sign the two agreements — one with the state and the other with the city — in order to be connected.

Phillips said the city has several water lines in East Porterville. Those came about when the city acquired a couple of small water districts in that unincorporated area of the county a few years ago. There are roughly 250 homes in East Porterville already connected to the city's water system.

Phillips said the city already has agreements from about 20 of the property owners.

Phillips said the work will mean some streets will be torn up, but the plan is all of those streets will be paved over.

East Porterville is ground zero of California's drought and until this year, residents without water had to get by on bottled water or a large tank placed in their yard and plumbed into the home. The goal of the project is to end the bottled water and tank program entirely in East Porterville, even though hooking up to the city's water system is

voluntary. Those who decline, but want to hook up after the project has ended, will face a bill of between \$2,000 and \$4,000 to be connected.

Jenni Byers, community development director with the city, said having a reliable and clean water source will improve the value of property in East Porterville by several thousands dollars per parcel. Snyder pointed out the installation of fire hydrants in East Porterville where there are very few today, should lower fire insurance rates for property owners.