

# THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

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## Residents urged to attend water meeting Wednesday

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By: The Porterville Recorder Staff

### **East Porterville project to be outlined**

East Porterville homeowners eligible for a free connection to a new, sustainable water supply are urged to attend an informational community meeting Wednesday on the East Porterville Water Supply Project.

The meeting will be held from 6 to 8:30 p.m. in the Granite Hills High School Cafeteria, 1701 East Putnam Ave. Simultaneous interpreter services will be available for Spanish speakers.

Representatives from the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and nonprofits Community Water Service (CWC), Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) and Community Services Employment Training (CSET) will explain the project and answer questions about the process property owners must follow to receive water deliveries through City of Porterville distribution lines.

Hundreds of homeowners whose wells went dry during California's five-year drought are eligible for the project, which is being financed by the State of California to end East Porterville's drought emergency. By completing a three-step sign-up process, homeowners can avoid a connection cost of at least \$10,000.

Property owners must sign a consent form and a contract called an extraterritorial service agreement (ESA), and finally, they must open a utility account with the City of Porterville. From start to finish, the paperwork takes about three weeks; the actual timing to connect to the system will depend on the schedule to lay new distribution lines and complete additional infrastructure. The project's first connection to an East Porterville home with existing water lines was made on Aug. 19.

Dec. 31 is the project's target date to deliver water to all Phase 1 property owners, but meeting that date will require completion of the pipeline construction and the owners' three-step sign-up process.

DWR Phase 1 Project Manager Robert Trang said approximately 300 East Porterville properties are eligible for the Phase 1 this year.

"The deadline to complete the ESA is Nov. 7," he said. "The sooner owners complete this important step, the sooner they can open a utility account and be scheduled for a connection to new water lines that are being laid in East Porterville.

"We really need more engagement by property owners if the project is to fulfill its potential," Trang said.

He emphasized the urgency with which

property owners should join the project.

"This is an extraordinary no-cost opportunity for owners to connect to the City of Porterville water system and permanently end their personal water emergency, not only for this drought but for future droughts as well," he said.

As of Sept. 29, only about half of the first 70 eligible properties in Phase 1A had completed all three steps, and a much lower percentage of the remaining 234 properties in Phase 1 had completed the process.

Steve Doe, DWR's project manager for 2017's Phase 2, said up to 700 additional homes are eligible to be connected to new distribution lines during Phase 2.

The East Porterville Water Supply Project is a joint effort by three State agencies — DWR, SWRCB and Cal OES — and the governments of Tulare County and the City of Porterville.

Residents of East Porterville, an unincorporated area in Tulare County, have been relying on deliveries of bottled water and non-potable water trucked in to large temporary water tanks installed on their properties. This unsustainable enterprise has been funded by the State at a monthly cost of more than \$650,000.

DWR and SWRCB are jointly leading the effort to connect East Porterville residents with the City of Porterville's municipal water supply as a long-term solution to the current drought emergency in East Porterville. SWRCB worked with local organizations and a community group, East Porterville for Water Justice, on a series of meetings to inform the community and get feedback about the project.

Eligible East Porterville residents who participate in the project by agreeing to annex their property to the City of Porterville will bear none of the connection costs, which are estimated to be at least \$10,000. Once connected, the residents' State-funded water deliveries will end, the temporary water tanks will be removed from their property and their water wells will be capped. Property owners will receive a monthly bill for their City of Porterville water service.