

THE FOOTHILLS SUN-GAZETTE

Self-Help takes reins on drought aid

June 7, 2017

By Paul Myers

Tulare County – While Governor Jerry Brown declared an end to the drought in California on April 7 he left out nine counties severely affected by the drought, Tulare County being one. But while the Governor's office recognized the precarious situation drought stricken counties were left in, funding from the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) was still set to be stopped. As a result, residents in the county who are still relying on the water tank program would be left out to dry unless they found a permanent solution between the declaration of the end of the drought and June 30 when funding is set to halt.

But during its April 18 meeting, the Board directed staff to explore funding options that would help residents find a permanent solution after the June 30 deadline. As of the Board May 23 meeting, the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) offered to extend funding without a match for one year starting July 1. However, it will be targeted only at the water tank program.

"[S]ome local government jurisdictions have identified households that may continue to require emergency water supply through their county-provided water tank program beyond the June deadline," stated a CalOES letter informing the County that it will extend funds to houses in need of potable water. "For those jurisdictions with households that have not yet secured an alternative potable water source by the June deadline, the State will continue to provide temporary funds for up to a year for the delivery of potable water for existing program participants in order to maintain public health and safety."

Health and Human Services Director Jason Britt, who presented the item to the Board stated that Self-Help enterprise will take over the administration of the water tank program after the June 30 deadline. He also answered a question posed by the Board during the April 18 meeting in regards to who owns the tanks. Britt noted that Self-Help, who actually purchased the tanks and the State recognizes them as the owners.

"Self-Help Enterprises, which owns the tanks in Tulare County and which wholly administers and operates Household Tank Program-equivalents in several other drought-affected counties, has indicated they are willing to undertake the totality of the program in Tulare County after July 1, 2017," stated a report prepared by the Health and Human Services Agency.

"Self-Help has been involved in Tulare County...we think this is an excellent opportunity to streamline services and to also make a demarcation between what the County was doing and what Self-Help is doing carrying forward," Britt added.

"I'd like to thank Self-Help for taking the initiative and taking over the program," stated supervisor Amy Schuklian.

Britt said that specifics on the extended funding will be coming from the State early this month.

Also, the Board voted to lift the Household Water Tank moratorium for the residents who were in the process of being approved when the moratorium was established. The tanks for the individuals are projected to be installed by June 15, and they fall within the guidelines of the extended funding as long as they are installed before the June 30 deadline.