

# WATER DEEPLY

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## Some California Towns Still Lack Water

June 2, 2017

By Water Deeply

The drought may be officially over in California, but hundreds of people still don't have reliable water. That's because their wells remain dry and solutions still have not been found.

An estimated 449 homes in Tulare County still rely on supplemental water tanks filled periodically by a tanker truck.

"There is a serious problem looming here," said Tom Collishaw, chief executive officer of Self-Help Enterprises, the local group that has been managing the water tank program for the county.

Worse, Tulare County supervisors voted May 23 to end their support of the water tank program, and will turn it over entirely to Self-Help Enterprises. There are still people waiting to get tanks installed, but the county will end permitting of new tanks on June 30.

State officials agreed to extend emergency funding for the county, which will allow Self-Help Enterprises to keep the tanks filled.

The state spent \$50 million to extend the City of Porterville's water system to serve East Porterville, allowing more than 250 tanks to be removed. A second phase of that project, expected to begin construction in June, will hook up about 700 more homes, bringing the total to nearly 1,000 homes out of the 1,100 in East Porterville that lost service due to dry wells.

Yet in the town of Okieville, only 14 out of 100 homes have water tanks.

"Before we used to be able to plant peppers, tomatoes, tomatillos, chiles, watermelons," Okieville resident Maria Marquez told NPR's Marketplace program. "Now we can't grow them, we have to buy everything ... Without water, we can't do anything."