

Monson gets new water well



Lala Luengas and others in Monson have a new water system that will bring safe and clean water to about 30 homes. RON HOLMAN

Water was too contaminated to drink for years

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Gladys Colunga said having potable water coming into her Monson home through the community's new well and the delivery system seems almost too good to be true.

"I feel like it's something that's still happening," she said. "It's something I can't believe."

For years, Monson residents' water was too contaminated to drink. In addition, drought conditions made getting drinking water even more difficult.

"We didn't live the drought," Colunga said. "We felt the

drought."

Earlier this week, just in time for Thanksgiving, the Monson system's first phase was completed, giving residents portable water.

"It such a big relief. We finally got water," said Jose Rojas, who

See WATER, Page 6A

Water

(Continued from Page 3A)

has lived in Monson for more than two decades. "We are not scared for the drought anymore."

Maria Herrera, Self-Help Enterprises community development manager, said the effort to bring the new well and water system to Monson started in 2008. Water samples tested poorly, showing high levels of nitrates.

Monson residents had received bottled water since.

Colunga said the donated drinking water helped, but it was not enough. Colunga said her husband would carry water containers into the home.

"We are a family of six," she said.

It was much of the same for Rojas, who said his family would ration their drinking water and use for cooking and brushing their teeth.

"It was a lot of hassle," he said. "It was a lot of work."

Herrera said local money and grants were used to design and construct Monson's water system.

"It took some time," she said. "But the project has created the opportunity for the community to come together."

Already, 29 residents have been connected to the Monson water system, Herrera said. Additional water connections will be made during the project's second phase.

Rojas said his home was connected



Lala Luengas opens a faucet in her front yard Monday as Monson residents celebrated their new water system that will bring safe and clean water to about 30 homes. RON HOLMAN

to the system three weeks ago. Colunga's home was hooked up just this week.

"It's exciting to hear about the project," Colunga said. "We will celebrate that we have running water."

The effort to bring potable water to Monson has made a difference on how Colunga views water use.

"Every drop counts. Don't waste it," she said. "You stop and think before you waste water. It opens your eyes and the way I think about water."