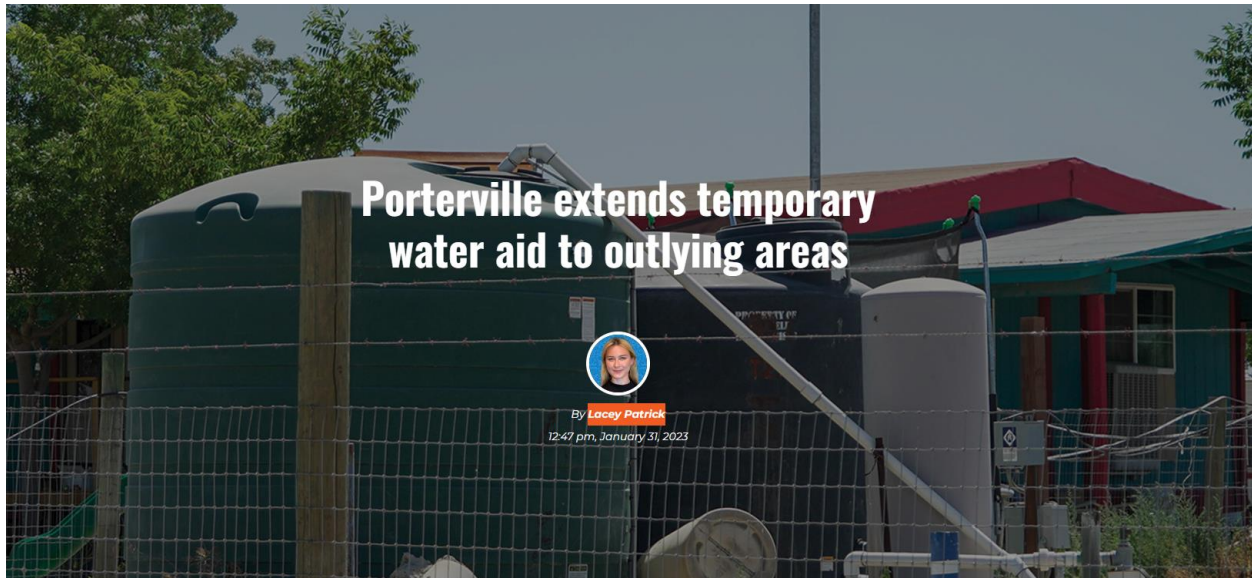


THE SUN-GAZETTE

Porterville extends temporary water aid to outlying areas

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The Porterville City Council approves to service over 300 homes with the city's water system after a well in Visalia became inaccessible due to recent deluge

PORTERVILLE- After heavy rain storms hit Tulare County this month, a water well that serviced over 300 homes became inaccessible due to a destroyed road. This caused the county to reach out to Porterville for help.

After the recent deluge that caused a Visalia well to be blocked off, the county found that Porterville's water system was closest in proximity to 389 affected homes. The homes sit in areas like Strathmore, Springville and other areas within the Eastern Tule Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). Shortly after, the Porterville City Council unanimously approved Tulare County's request to provisionally use Porterville's water. With the approval, the Porterville water system will fill temporary household tanks that were already in place as a part of the Self-Help Enterprise's (SHE) Emergency Tank Program.

"There are no other resources. Due to some GSA issues and concerns, we have really been seeing a lot of the communities [not] allowing us to purchase water from them," Tammy McVay, director of Self-Help Enterprises emergency services said. "Those homes will be without water starting this week."

This came after a road closure caused by flooding on Avenue 368 in Visalia, which prevented contract water haulers from SHE from being unable to access the Bob Wiley Detention Facility well. This well provides source water for 389 homes each week, and delivers to their water storage tanks

on a weekly basis. With no other available water resources and the inability to access the well, Porterville's city council agreed to support the access to its water on an emergency provisional basis until the road is repaired and the well can again be accessed. However, they do not have a date in which it will be fixed yet.

The road was not a paved road, but rather a dirt road that was destroyed from the deluge that the county experienced. Though the road was closed, haulers and contractors continued to use it to access the well, which resulted in even worse roadway conditions.

SHE's Emergency Tank Program has been taking place across Tulare County for residents whose water wells have run dry. The program is funded through the State of California, which funds the delivery of water on a weekly basis from the Bob Wiley Detention Facility well to residents in need. Without access to that well, there is no other water source for those residents, which prompted the Tulare County Office of Emergency Services to respond to Self-Help's request.

"From a standpoint of [water] capacity, there's not a negative impact to the community at this point in time to provide that assistance. I would just say the importance is counting [usage] and working out the details," public works director Michael Knight said.

To support the county and residents across the county, the city council agreed to the provisional access to city water from a previous agreement as part of the East Porterville Water Supply Project. The council agreed on the condition that the water is carefully tracked and recorded to the standards of the Eastern Tule GSA.

The amount of water requested was 1.3 million gallons a month, which will be billed at the same rate as city residents. McVay advised that there were no other water resources for these homes. The council directed that an update of road repair and additional information be provided at its next meeting on Feb. 7 in the determination as to whether the request for water needed to be continued. McVay said that usually the max water delivered is 1.7 million gallons, but due to the weather they will not need as much.

"The season is on our side, so during this time of the year demands because of low temperatures given the rainstorm," Knight said. "There will be record keeping of the water taken. And then we would have to work out the details of how it's accounted for."