

SIERRA DAILY NEWS

California's LandFlex Program Achieves Major Groundwater Conservation Milestones

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The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has made significant progress in its LandFlex Program, which focuses on saving groundwater and protecting community wells. Since its launch in 2022, the program has successfully safeguarded over 100,000 acre-feet of groundwater and ensured the safety of 16,500 drinking water wells across the state.

LandFlex was designed to support small and mid-sized farms in the Central Valley during a severe drought. The DWR allocated \$23.3 million in grants to six groundwater sustainability agencies, assisting 52 farms in transitioning to more sustainable practices. These initiatives have led to a reduction in groundwater over-pumping and have helped lands comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act ahead of the 2040 deadline.

Karla Nemeth, DWR Director, emphasized the program's flexibility and its role as a climate-resilient solution for groundwater sustainability. She noted that the program not only conserves water but

also ensures that communities reliant on groundwater have access to safe drinking water while allowing farms to maintain production sustainably.

Partnerships with organizations such as the California Department of Food and Agriculture and Self-Help Enterprises have played a crucial role in the program's success. These collaborations have raised awareness and supported vulnerable communities and farmers.

Industry leaders like Anja Raudabaugh, CEO of Western United Dairies, and Blake Vann, Chairman of Almond Alliance, have praised the program for its immediate impact on sustainability and its potential to shape the future of sustainable farming in California. They highlight the importance of collaboration in developing innovative practices that protect water resources and support agricultural communities.

For further information about the LandFlex Program, visit water.ca.gov/landflex.