Drought and Drinking Water

Here’s a fact: California WILL experience longer, more severe droughts due to climate change. This can cause drinking water supplies for communities relying on domestic wells or small community water systems to run dry or become contaminated under future drought scenarios. Impacted communities are at risk of experiencing any of the following challenges:

- No access to water for drinking, cooking, or sanitation purposes;
- Higher water rates from having to drill or pump from a deeper depth;
- Increased level of water contamination;
- Emotional, psychological, and health impacts related to not having access to safe water.

This directly threatens California’s ability to secure access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

Drinking Water Tool

Community Water Center has just released a web tool that can help communities and decision makers better prepare to protect drinking water during these changing conditions.

Uses for this Tool:

- Discover where your water comes from based on your address
- Learn about groundwater quality and supply in your area
- Learn how a future drought could impact your drinking water supply
- Learn how to get involved with local water issues
- To learn more about your drinking water visit: drinkingwatertool.communitywatercenter.org

EXAMPLE OF A KEY FINDING:
If another drought occurs as severe as the 2012-2016 drought, more than 4,500 domestic wells in the Central Valley’s alluvial groundwater aquifer would be impacted. The cost to mitigate this damage would be more than $115 million.

The Drinking Water Tool was developed in partnership with the UC Berkeley – Water Equity Science Shop.

1 Results of this analysis were contingent upon available data and analysis was only undertaken in the Central Valley’s alluvial groundwater aquifer. As such, many parts of the Central Valley are missing from drought scenario estimates due to missing groundwater elevation data and/or incomplete domestic well construction data (Gailey 2020).
The Solution:
Pass SB 971 (Hertzberg) so California communities can be better prepared for the next drought

Passing SB 971 (Hertzberg) will help small water suppliers and rural communities be better prepared during periods of declining groundwater levels and drought by:

- Requiring proactive drought planning for small water systems
- Requiring proactive drought planning for rural communities not covered by urban or small water supplier water shortage contingency plans
- Building capacity to reduce the risk of small water systems and domestic wells running out of water
- Providing technical assistance funding that will help small water systems prepare a strong plan
- Requiring coordinated and streamlined drought response from all levels of government
- Improved data collection, tracking and sharing of small water systems and domestic wells at risk

Take Action: You can get involved to make sure California is better prepared for the next drought and that communities like yours are not left without water.

Here are ways to support SB 971 (Hertzberg):

- Use the Drinking Water Tool to learn more about water conditions in your community
- Write a letter of support for SB 971
- Urge your local water board, city and county to pass a Resolution supporting SB 971
- Write and call your elected officials to describe how the drought will impact you and what type of resources you need

Take action to support SB 971 (Hertzberg)!
Learn more here: www.communitywatercenter.org/droughtplanning