

FY 2024-25 Fund Expenditure Plan for the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund

Response to Comments Received July 24, 2024

Submitted by:	Commenter(s)	Comment Topic	Comment Note	Summary of Comment Received	Response to Comment	Edits to FEP - Pg #
Association of California Water Agencies	Soren Nelson	Domestic Wells	SGMA	Seeking clarity on SAFER's responsibility for failing or at-risk domestic wells in areas where a Groundwater Sustainability Agency may have an active well mitigation program. There are no reference to SGMA in the FEP given its nexus with drinking water quality and supply. It would be helpful to have some discussion in the final FEP about how the Board is navigating the potentially overlapping jurisdiction between SAFER, well mitigation programs (and maybe CV-SALTS and Irrigated Lands?) as it relates to bringing safe drinking water to residents with noncompliant domestic wells in order to avoid cost inefficiencies. I think this would be particularly helpful give the addition of the water source reliability indicator in the Needs Assessment (and where the Board sees GSA's/SAFER's responsibility for supply vs. quality for wells).	The role of the State Water Board and the SAFER Program in the assistance of communities served by state smalls and domestic wells will be further evaluated and considered this coming fiscal year through multi-party discussions occurring with the Drought Resilience Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative, as well as with Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long Term Sustainability (CV-SALTS) Management Zone groups, Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), and other local non-governmental organization (NGO) partners. More information to be included in future FEPs.	Clarifying text added to Section III.A (pg. 12) and Section VI.B.3 (pg. 50).
Self-Help Enterprises	Thomas J. Collishaw	SAFER Program Goals	SSWS / DW	The inclusion of goals and measures in this year's FEP is appreciated as it offers clear direction for the program. While these goals and measures address the needs of community water systems, we suggest adding clarifying language to ensure they are also inclusive of state small water systems and domestic wells.	Please see the response to the first comment above related to domestic wells and state small water systems.	Clarifying text added to Section III.A (pg. 12) and Section VI.B.3 (pg. 50).
Self-Help Enterprises	Thomas J. Collishaw	Fund Target Allocation Details	-	We appreciate the ongoing funding for interim and emergency assistance for various water systems and domestic wells. The increased allocation for construction is also crucial for helping non-compliant systems and addressing the rising costs of construction that affect many of the systems supported by SHE.	Comment noted.	None
Self-Help Enterprises	Thomas J. Collishaw	Administrators	-	The Administrator program has improved management in our service area, and we appreciate the efforts to appoint full scope Administrators. We acknowledge the progress of appointing the first partial scope Administrator and encourage DFA staff to collaborate with DDW and TA Providers to identify other systems that could benefit from a partial scope Administrator to secure construction funding or provide additional community support.	Comment noted.	None
Self-Help Enterprises	Thomas J. Collishaw	Direct O&M Support		We recommend sharing a clear process for recommending systems for O&M funding under Group 2 with TA Providers and others working with water systems. Our staff aim to adjust artificially low rates to improve affordability, and O&M funding could help establish better rates and reserves for these systems.	Per Section 6 of the Direct O&M Funding Program Guidelines (Appendix K), Group 2 systems funding requests are accepted on a continuous basis. Group 2 system applications are considered on a case-by-case and Section 4.1.2 of Appendix K lists types of circumstances that may be considered.	None

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Self-Help Enterprises	Thomas J. Collishaw	Expedited Drinking Water Grant (EDWG) Funding Program	-	The EDWG program has been crucial in advancing community projects supported by SHE, but there has been no funding round or communication about future funding since summer 2023. We recommend providing more information about upcoming funding rounds and how to identify qualifying projects. Additionally, identifying projects for EDWG funding earlier would help use TA resources more efficiently, streamline the application process, and better support projects that do not qualify for EDWG.	Rounds 1 through 3 of the EDWG Program was considered the pilot phase of the funding program, as many of the procedures, application forms, and review documents were actively being developed during these rounds. As a result, Division of Financial Assistance (DFA) staff identified eligible in-house construction applications for each round of funding and has not yet advertised the funding program for new applicants or accepted brand new applications. As DFA staff continues to develop the EDWG program in subsequent rounds, it is anticipated that an open solicitation for new applications will be advertised in the future.	None
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability	Eric Orellana, Jennifer Clary, and Elana Muroff	Safer long-term vision		The Board Should Prioritize Domestic Well Projects, Develop Goals and Metrics for the 143,663 private domestic wells at high-risk for water quality or water supply, and Establish a Vision for Coordinating with Responsible Parties. We recommend the Board establish a goal to fund technical assistance, planning, and construction for private domestic well projects that showcase the different types of challenges these types of communities face in order to develop an understanding of how to tackle these different challenges.	Please see the response to the first comment above related to domestic wells and state small water systems.	Clarifying text added to Section III.A (pg. 12).Clarifying text added to Section III.A (pg. 12) and Section VI.B.3 (pg. 50).
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability	Eric Orellana, Jennifer Clary, and Elana Muroff	Management Zones		The Board does not currently have sufficient funding to provide long-term solutions to every at-risk private domestic well. Therefore, the Board must identify: what high priority areas and issues it is able to address in the next five years, using the priorities identified above; the level of remaining funds needed for high priority areas; and the level of need for the rest of the domestic well population. As part of this exercise, the State should identify how it can be supported by domestic well mitigation programs developed by local groundwater sustainability agencies and management zones. Currently, programs by local groundwater sustainability agencies and management zones are non-existent or fragmented.	Please see the response to the first comment above related to domestic wells and state small water systems.	Clarifying text added to Section III.A (pg. 12) and Section VI.B.3 (pg. 50).

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Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability	Eric Orellana, Jennifer Clary, and Elana Muroff	remove non-DAC eligibility		The Board Should Remove Non-DAC Eligibility for Grant/Principal Forgiveness and Increase FY24-25 Technical Assistance Allocation. The Board should increase the technical assistance allocation to \$15 million to ensure technical assistance providers providing services to DACs have enough funding to continue critical support to DACs without safe drinking water.	The proposed FY 2024-25 Technical Assistance target has been increased to \$20 million to potentially add funding to existing agreements, including adding capacity to continue work on planning efforts for consolidations including Failing systems that could potentially benefit domestic well communities with contamination issues. Technical Assistance will continue to be prioritized for DACs but non-DACS could potentially receive Technical Assistance if its for a consolidation project addressing Failing and At-Risk systems.	Text added to IV.B.2 (pg. 25). None
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability	Eric Orellana, Jennifer Clary, and Elana Muroff	Advance pay		The Board Should Develop Advanced Payment Guidelines. These guidelines are essential to increase the level of support provided to struggling Community Water Systems and will help expedite the development and construction of projects.	The State Water Board is actively developing guidelines for the implementation of Advanced Payment. DFA staff anticipate that the Advance Payment guidelines will be finalized and will be incorporated as an appendix to the FEP in Fall 2024.	None
California Water Association	Jennifer M. Capitolo	Consolidation		Encourage the SWRCB to continue to coordination with the CPUC regarding the provision of SADW funding, especially concerning consolidations.	Comment noted.	None