

Plumas County Drought and Water Shortage Task Force

Communications and Engagement Framework

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

In September 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Senate Bill (SB) 552 (Hertzberg), enacting California Water Code sections 10609.50 through 10609.80, which assigned new responsibilities and requirements at the state and local levels to help small water suppliers and rural communities reduce their risks of inadequate water supply amid a water shortage event. A water shortage event could be caused by droughts or other emergencies such as wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and other local emergencies. Through SB 552, the California State Legislature identifies counties as the best-suited government entity to provide the needed leadership to improve water resilience for state small water systems (SSWS)¹ and domestic wells².

In accordance with SB 552, counties are required to prepare a county Drought Resilience Plan (County DRP) to achieve meaningful and long-term improvements in water resilience for their residents. In addition to the development of a County DRP, SB 552 also directs each county to establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force or establish an alternative process that “facilitates drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county’s jurisdiction” (California Water Code [CWC] §10609.70(a)(2)). This process will inform the development of the County DRP and cultivate the continued practices of drought planning and improving long-term water resilience.

1.2 Legislative Direction

California Water Code Section 10609.70 provides, in pertinent part:

(a)(1) A county shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction, and shall invite representatives from the state and other local governments, including groundwater sustainability agencies, and community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents, to participate in the task force.

(2) In lieu of the task force required by paragraph (1), a county may establish an alternative process that facilitates drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. The alternative process shall provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.

1.3 Drought Task Force

1.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Plumas County Drought and Water Shortage Task Force (Task Force) is to:

¹ A state small water system provides piped water to the public for human consumption for at least five, but not more than 14, service connections, and does not regularly serve drinking water to more than an average of 25 individuals daily for more than 60 days out of the year (California Health and Safety Code [HSC] Section 116275(n)).

² A domestic well is a groundwater well used to supply water for the domestic needs of an individual residence or a water system that is not a public water system, and has no more than four service connections, as defined in HSC Section 116681(i) (with equivalent definition in California Water Code Section 1060951(k)).

- Facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for SSWS and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction.
- Oversee DRP development and guide its long-term implementation.
- Implement this Communications and Engagement Framework to facilitate coordination and communication on a regular basis as well as during drought or water-shortage emergencies among state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, residents, and others representing the concerns of SSWS and domestic wells.

1.3.2 Organization and Decision-Making Structure

The Task Force consists of representatives from Plumas County's Department of Public Works, Department of Environmental Health, and Department of Emergency Services. The Plumas County Department of Public Works will serve as the Task Force facilitator and the main point-of-contact.

The Task Force is advisory and does not have decision-making authority. Task Force meetings are internal to County Department staff and are not subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act. The Board of Supervisors is the decision-making body of the county. The Board of Supervisors is the body that would adopt the Drought Resilience Plan. The Task Force will present the draft DRP to the Plumas County Board of Supervisors and coordinate the implementation of the DRP once adopted.

The DRP Interested Parties are individuals and organizations as identified in CWC 10609.70 (2) and that are engaged and informed during development and implementation of the Plumas County DRP.

2.0 PLUMAS COUNTY DRP COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

2.1 Communities of Interest

Meaningful and ongoing engagement of DRP Interested Parties is imperative to support development of the DRP and preparedness for future water shortage and drought emergencies. Outreach and engagement activities will be focused on communities served by SSWS and domestic wells, and other community-based organizations and local agencies representing the interests of SSWS and domestic well-reliant communities. Efforts will additionally engage Tribes and Tribal groups across the county, including the Tribe of Maidu Indians of California, Greenville Rancheria, and Maidu Rancheria. Outreach and engagement will also focus on communities that are more likely to experience social and physical vulnerabilities as they relate to drought and water shortages. Populations with high social vulnerability scores may include low-income households, people with disabilities, those without access to a vehicle, seniors and children, and those with language barriers.

2.2 OUTREACH TOOLS

2.2.1 County Website

The Task Force will create a landing page for DRP Interested Parties and community members to stay up to date on DRP development and future implementation activities. The County Department of Public Works will maintain and update the website with timely and relevant information throughout the DRP development process, including informational background and technical and planning documents. The website may also be used as a location to post the DRP and solicit public review and input.

2.2.2 DRP Interested Parties Database

The Task Force will maintain a DRP Interested Parties Database of contact information to communicate information relevant to SB 522 to individuals, organizations, or agencies that have expressed interest in being informed about the County DRP. This contact information database will be used to create an email listserv where DRP Interested Parties can receive notices regarding plan preparation, meeting announcements, and availability of draft plans, maps, and other relevant documents. DRP Interested Parties can sign up on the Plumas County DRP website or during regularly scheduled public meetings. The Task Force may also distribute public notices through the County's emergency alert system email listserv to inform other interested parties about County DRP updates.

2.2.3 Public Notices

Notices may include including fliers, email copy, and social media posts to promote public meetings, workshops, and resources available during water shortages. The County can distribute these notices to the DRP Interested Parties Database.

The notices may be distributed via email by posting on websites and social media accounts, such as the County of Plumas and the Plumas County Office of Emergency Services Facebook pages.

The Task Force may post flyers and public notices at physical locations throughout the County. Given the rural nature of Plumas County, and with preference expressed by the Task Force, the Task Force will prioritize flyer and public notice posting that will reach individuals in more rural areas served by SSWS and domestic wells. Public noticing in rural areas may include popular community convening locations such as libraries, the County administration building, fire houses, and the Grizzly Store at Lake Davis.

The Task Force may also inform local newspapers, such as the Plumas Sun, Sierra Daily News, and Mountain Messenger to share information regarding DRP development and public meeting notices.

2.3 OUTREACH ACTIVITES

Public outreach activities are intended to inform, engage, interact with, and respond to interested parties and the public during the development, adoption, and, later, implementation of the County DRP. Public outreach activities also assist the County in collecting information important to short- and long-term water supply planning.

2.3.1 Briefings to the Board of Supervisors

The Task Force may provide as-needed briefings to the County Board of Supervisors on the status of the DRP's development and implementation, and any upcoming outreach activities. Briefings are anticipated to be conducted during regularly scheduled Board meetings. The primary purpose of these briefings is to update the Board of Supervisors on the County DRP and next steps, and to respond to questions from the Board.

2.3.2 Public Meetings

Public meetings will be an important venue for educating the public about SB 552, the County DRP, and water shortage resources. Public meetings are anticipated to be held as hybrid meetings accessible for interested parties to join both in-person at a pre-disclosed location in the County and virtually through Zoom. Meeting recordings are anticipated to be posted on the County website.

There are anticipated to be up to four public meetings during the development of the DRP to engage and inform DRP Interested Parties. The meetings are anticipated to address the following topics:



**Meeting dates are subject to change based on availability of Drought Task Force and progress of DRP development.*

Meeting locations will be determined by the Task Force, with an intention to focus public meetings in rural communities served by SSWS and domestic wells. Meeting details will be made available to the public on the County website and through the Interested Parties Database.

The following potential meeting locations were identified by the Task Force for the four public meetings during DRP development. These meeting locations were identified as locations that are more likely to reach remote rural communities served by domestic wells and SSWS.

Almanor Recreation Center
451 Meadowbrook Loop, Chester, CA 96020

Quincy Veteran's Hall
274 Lawrence St, Quincy, CA 95971

Historic Taylorsville Hall
4322 Main St, Taylorsville, CA 95983

Beckwourth Peak Fire Station
180 Main Street, Beckwourth, CA 96129

Quincy Branch Library
445 Jackson St, Quincy CA 95971

2.3.3 Survey Collection

The Task Force may conduct surveys throughout the development of the DRP to gather public input key priorities, response actions, mitigation strategies. Surveys are anticipated to be posted on the County website and distributed to the Interested Parties Database.

2.3.4 Collaboration with Relevant Agencies

The Task Force may collaborate with other relevant agencies, such as local water suppliers, Community Services Districts, and the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District, to facilitate preparation of the DRP and coordination during future water shortage or drought emergencies. Collaboration may include information and resource sharing, partnering to host joint meetings, and coordination on targeted outreach activities.

3.0 Implementation Activities

Following the adoption of the DRP, the Task Force will continue to implement this Communications and Engagement Framework and re-evaluate the effectiveness of the public outreach process throughout DRP implementation. Informational materials and website content will be updated regularly at key implementation milestones, with periodic updates to reflect the status of the County DRP's implementation. In addition, new materials can be developed to help the public understand next steps, how they can stay engaged in the County DRP's implementation, and how to participate in call-to-action activities.