

Meeting Summary

Drought Resilience Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative Roles & Responsibilities for Domestic Wells (DW) and State Small Water Systems (SSWS) Workshop #2

On Thursday, May 28, 2026, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted the second in a series of workshops to address [the DRIP Collaborative 2024 recommendation](#) on clarifying roles and responsibilities to DW and SSWS affected by water supply shortages and water quality. During the workshop, participants were invited to consider a proposed approach for understanding local response efforts within a broader statewide context, and provide feedback to help identify lessons, opportunities, and potential gaps that can inform and advance the initiative.

Deputy Directory Paul Gosselin, DWR – Sustainable Water Management Division, welcomed participants and emphasized the importance of addressing drought impacts on domestic well users, both for communities currently experiencing water shortages and for future drought preparedness. He encouraged participants to provide feedback on the proposed process while recognizing the complexity of the topic. Deputy Director Gosselin stressed the importance of keeping people at the center of the discussion and approaching this work through the lens of human dignity and the human right to water.

Roles and Responsibilities Initiative Development Process

Participants reviewed progress on the Roles and Responsibilities initiative, which was established in response to a 2024 recommendation to clarify the roles of state, local, and other entities in addressing water supply and water quality risks affecting domestic wells and state small water systems. Updates were provided on the vision statement, framework, program inventory, and primers, as well as the timeline and key milestones for advancing the work. The discussion highlighted how this effort will inform future DRIP Collaborative discussions, development of the white paper, and broader conversations related to SB 552 implementation. In response to feedback provided by DRIP Collaborative members, this workshop was focused on exploring how to best understand conditions at the local level to inform the identification of existing roles and responsibilities related gaps.

Assessing Local Plans and Resources - Process and Example

A proposed process and example were presented to guide the discussion on local short-term response actions and how existing programs can inform the identification of gaps and future needs. The discussion was grounded in previously identified considerations for evaluating programs and strategies, including scope, relevance to domestic wells and state small water systems, effectiveness, accessibility and equity, sustainability and longevity, and coordination.

The investigation focused on understanding what programs exist at the local level and how those efforts can help assess program availability, gaps, and potential future needs. The proposed four-step process included: (1) identifying a geographic area of focus, beginning with areas experiencing the highest concentration of reported dry wells; (2) identifying relevant planning efforts and resources; (3) compiling local and regional programs, activities, and strategies that are in place or planned; and (4) assessing the information gathered to determine which elements are most useful for identifying gaps and future opportunities. While the presented example focused on a single geographic area, it was noted that lessons from the discussion could help inform how and where the approach may be expanded to a broader geographic scale.

Julie Ekstrom, DWR – Water Justice Office, presented an example application of the proposed process in an area in Madera County with a high concentration of reported dry wells while capturing variation across locations. The example was intended to illustrate how local conditions can be assessed to better understand existing response efforts and identify potential gaps and opportunities. As part of the process, four key sources of information were reviewed: County Drought Resilience Plans, Groundwater Sustainability Agency domestic well mitigation plans, the Water Board’s water quality well testing and technical assistance inventory, and OEHHA’s county water quality capacity assessment developed for the SAFER risk assessment.

Julie highlighted that each source provides different but complementary information and that no single dataset captures the full picture of water supply and water quality response activities. She demonstrated how existing plans, programs, and resources apply to domestic wells facing water supply loss or water quality concerns. The review revealed considerable variation in available services, planning efforts, and implementation capacity across jurisdictions, underscoring the complexity of assessing local response capacity and the importance of understanding local conditions when evaluating gaps and future opportunities.

Working Session - Compiling Local Level Response Coverage

Participants were invited to join a breakout session and further explore the proposed approach. Participants were asked to focus on two key questions:

1. Whether the presented approach and level of detail are appropriate and useful for addressing the recommendations related to roles and responsibilities and for helping identify potential gaps.
2. Whether the information and process being developed could have value beyond the immediate scope of the initiative and be leveraged to support other efforts in the future.

Participants reported that they generally support the proposed methodology and agreed that the inventory and mapping effort provides an important foundation for the work and should be completed before moving into the identification of solutions. Participants noted that the inventory can help inform actionable guidance while recognizing significant regional variation and differing local needs. They emphasized that the inventory and review of drought plans are critical for understanding existing commitments and responsibilities, while cautioning that many commitments are contingent on funding and resources and may not have the durability needed to assume they will continue indefinitely. Participants also noted that identifying gaps may require consideration of program effectiveness, implementation, and local conditions, and discussed whether the inventory should be maintained as a living document or serve as a baseline for understanding where local entities have expressed a willingness to act and where additional state support may be needed.

White Paper Outline

Julie provided a brief overview of a draft outline for the Roles and Responsibilities white paper, noting that it will continue to evolve based on participant feedback. The proposed structure includes an introduction, discussion of the framework and scope, a summary of the process and methodology, and a synthesis of findings from the inventory and analysis. The paper is expected to focus primarily on documenting existing conditions, activities, and emerging themes at the state and local levels, supported by an appendix that summarizes findings from the plans and resources reviewed throughout the initiative. Participants were invited to support the development and drafting of the white paper.