

Meeting Summary

Drought Resilience Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative Roles & Responsibilities for Domestic Wells (DW) and State Small Water Systems (SSWS) Workshop #3

On Monday, August 24th, 2026, the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted the third in a series of workshops to address [the 2024 DRIP Collaborative recommendation](#) on clarifying roles and responsibilities to DW and SSWS affected by water supply shortages. During the workshop, the group reviewed the progress made to-date, heard and discussed the initial results from a review of the completed County Drought Resilience Plans (CDPRs), and learned about related, ongoing work that may feed into the white paper produced on this topic.

Deputy Director Paul Gosselin, DWR – Sustainable Water Management Division, and Chief Deputy Director Karen Mogus, State Water Board (SWB), welcomed participants and thanked them for their engagement on this important topic. Both emphasized the interest from others at State agencies (SWB, DWR, etc.) on the work this group is doing.

Roles and Responsibilities Process and Progress to Date

Participants reviewed progress on the Roles and Responsibilities work the DRIP Collaborative has completed to date. The effort began with a framework based on the lifecycle of a well, along with the external factors affecting well function and water availability. Feedback on this framework was gathered at [Workshop 1](#), where participants also completed inventory tables of relevant laws and programs. The framework and inventory were refined and further developed into the [Draft Roles and Responsibilities Primer](#), which was brought to the [April DRIP Collaborative meeting](#) to receive feedback. Discussions in both Workshop 1 and the April meeting emphasized that roles and responsibilities issues are highly localized, requiring a local lens (rather than statewide) to meaningfully understand gaps and conditions.

Following the April meeting, the work focused on the response phases of the framework (both short-term response and long-term mitigation). DWR conducted a review of local plans and programs in areas with the greatest concentration of reported dry wells, identifying and compiling relevant planning resources to clarify what currently exists at the local level. Early results were shared at [Workshop 2](#), and the refined process was presented at the [July DRIP Collaborative meeting](#).

The [Draft Roles and Responsibilities Primer](#) has been revised based on feedback from the DRIP Collaborative and workshops, with updates including expanded descriptions of on-the-ground experiences, additional entities (including water quality coalitions, regional water boards, water haulers and vendors, watermasters, private developers, and LAFCOs), and added references to relevant legislation. The primer is available for review and comment through October 30th, with comments emailed to drip@water.ca.gov with “Primer Comment” in the subject line.

County Drought Resilience Plans (CDRPs) Review

Julie Ekstrom, DWR, provided background on the County Drought Resilience Plans (CDRPs), required by SB 552 (2021), that were reviewed. The CDRPs are required to consider several elements (California Water Code Section 10609.70 (b)): consolidation options for existing water

systems and domestic wells; domestic well drinking water mitigation programs; provision of emergency and interim drinking water solutions; the steps necessary to implement the plan; and an analysis of local, state, and federal funding sources available for implementation.

This review included 55 plans and assessed each CDRP for their inclusion of a list of activities/actions drawn from the requirements of SB 552 and further refined from past DRIP Collaborative discussions (July meeting, Workshop 2). These activities were bundled into four groups:

- Emergency water provisions: bottled/package water, bulk water delivery (existing tanks), dedicated fill stations
- Institutional support for emergency harm reduction: expedited well permitting, local emergency declaration, water conservation program
- Support for interim solutions: emergency intertie activation, temporary water storage tanks, point-of-use treatment
- Deeper institutional capacity: mutual aid agreements, NGO/CBO water distribution, system consolidation support, water vendor/hauler procurement, GSA domestic well mitigation plan.

Plans developed with DWR assistance were encouraged to describe what the county would do with full access to needed resources, rather than only what is currently in place. To reflect this and better capture the availability of the services described above, each element was classified based on how the element was described in the plan:

- Available or in-progress with no additional resources needed
- Proposed or in-progress, but contingent on additional resources
- Deferred to local GSA for domestic well mitigation
- Not feasible or not identified

Across the statewide exploratory review, "proposed or in-progress, but contingent on additional resources" was by far the most dominant classification across all activities and county plans. Julie noted that this points to a resource gap rather than an awareness gap: counties are broadly aware of these tools and have planned for them, but implementation requires additional staff time, county budget, or external funding. Emergency provisions and the institutional support surrounding them had stronger coverage statewide (available, in-progress, or proposed) compared to support for interim solutions and deeper institutional capacity, where not-addressed or not-feasible classifications were more common. A few element-specific observations stood out:

- Emergency provisions (bottled water, bulk water delivery, and fill stations) were reported as proposed or in-progress but contingent on additional resources in roughly half of plans, split evenly with those already available or in-progress. None of the plans deferred these emergency provisions to a GSA.
- Local emergency declaration authority is well established across nearly all counties.
- About half of county plans address dry well mitigation through well rehabilitation or replacement.
- Temporary storage tanks were the most frequently cited interim solution, most often proposed or in-progress but contingent on funding; point-of-use treatment had

comparatively low coverage, which Julie attributed to it not being an explicit SB 552 requirement.

- System consolidation showed very little implementation. SB 552 language motivated many counties to complete a consolidation feasibility evaluation, but counties' limited legal authority over consolidation leaves them with little ability to act beyond that assessment.

Julie noted that this statewide summary does not yet reflect regional variation, which was explored further in [the breakout discussions](#). Counties were divided into 7 regions to review for regional trends:

- Northern CA: Del Norte, Humboldt, Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, Trinity
- Sacramento Valley: Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sacramento, Sutter, Tehama, Yolo
- Bay Area: Contra Costa, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, Sonoma
- Central Coast: Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz
- Mountain Counties: Alpine, Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra
- San Joaquin Valley: Calaveras, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, Tuolumne
- Southern CA: Imperial, Inyo, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Ventura

Hope Hauptman, CA Institute for Water Resources – UC ANR, shared initial takeaways from the county interviews she conducted about their CDRP development experience. The project has interviewed staff involved in plan development from 19 counties, aiming to understand how the drought resilience planning process has gone, what gaps it has revealed, what barriers counties anticipate moving into the implementation phase now that plans are largely complete, and what counties see as their top needs going forward. Hope also noted plans to follow up with a survey, informed by the interview findings, to hear from counties that were not able to participate in an interview. From the interviews conducted, Hope shared that counties reported institutional growth as a result of the planning process, including improved communication between departments that had not previously coordinated closely. A written report on all the interview findings is nearly complete and will be shared with DRIP Collaborative members once finalized.

Work Session – Implications of CDRPs Review on Regional Capacity

Participants were invited to join one of four regional breakout discussions to review the statewide and regional summaries of drought mitigation and response activities identified in the CDRPs. Each group was asked to designate a participant to report back and to discuss:

- Regional Experience: additional reactions to the review process, and what patterns in the Regional Summary Table could inform efforts to strengthen local capacity to prepare for and respond to drought and water shortage conditions, and how those patterns align (or don't) with participants' understanding.
- Statewide Summary: regional findings were expected to vary from the statewide summary; what specific causes or drivers behind those differences might be worth highlighting to better inform regional and local approaches?

Groups were asked to report back 2–3 key takeaways focused on regional and/or statewide needs or gaps.

Room 1: Sacramento Valley, Mountain Counties, Northern CA

- Interest in the distinction between qualitative and quantitative analysis, and a specific question about the granularity of the "not feasible" versus "unknown" classification, whether an element was actively evaluated and found infeasible, or simply not addressed in a way that made that distinction visible.
- Questions about whether groundwater banking (physical subsurface storage projects) was captured within the review.
- Observations that the rural character of Northern California and the Mountain Counties limits certain options, particularly emergency interties, which depend heavily on population density and proximity to other systems.
- Questions about how other programs and planning efforts (e.g., CV-SALTS management zones, IRWM) factor into or inform county responses, and whether GSAs play a role in areas (like many mountain counties) that lack them due to fractured rock geology.
- A concern about expedited well permitting in fractured rock systems: whether streamlining permitting without considering aquifer impacts could work against county drought response goals in areas already facing groundwater pressure.

Room 2: San Joaquin Valley

- The comparison between regional and statewide priorities was seen as a valuable feature of the review.
- A recurring theme was that many activities depend on state-level or outside funding to move forward, reinforcing the resource-gap finding from the statewide summary.
- The analysis was seen as potentially useful for legislators or other decision-makers seeking to understand the specific needs of their communities.
- Members noted uncertainty and diversity in how different counties are likely to use their plans going forward, suggesting an opportunity to support funding applications or to integrate CDRP actions into other required local planning efforts.

Room 3: Central Coast, Bay Area

- A member, speaking as a tribal environmental director, noted that a county-level focus does not ensure tribal partners are included or represented in the planning process, a gap of particular concern in rural California, where tribal partners are a strong asset and ally in disaster response and, as sovereign nations, have access to opportunities and authorities that counties do not. The member requested that future work incorporate a similar opportunity for tribal engagement, distinct from having tribal members present among general participants.
- Members found the "not feasible," "not identified," and "unknown" categories vague and suggested they be more clearly defined; one suggestion was to add a "not applicable" category, since some elements may not be addressed simply because they don't apply in a given area.

- A member noted that future plan revisions (potentially triggered by new funding availability or a major drought) could be an opportunity to ask these clarifying questions more explicitly.

Room 4: Southern California

- The region stood out for having a notably large share of elements classified as "not feasible" or "not identified" relative to the rest of the state; the group attributed this to the complexity of Southern California's water system, including reliance on imported water and adjudicated groundwater basins, which has tended to create systemic silos in how water issues are handled.

Upcoming Activities

Several members shared updates on work related to the Roles and Responsibilities effort:

- Domestic Well Mitigation Plan Inventory: Nataly Escobedo Garcia (Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability) and Laura Ramos (Fresno State) described an effort to inventory GSA domestic well mitigation plans statewide, paralleling the CDRP review but focused on plans developed under SGMA. Unlike CDRPs, mitigation plans vary widely in whether they exist at all and where they can be found, often requiring significant searching to locate. UC Berkeley (led by Kristen Dobbin), UC ANR, Leadership Counsel, and Fresno State are collaborating to compile these plans in a central location and review what is covered in each. This review will document the requirements/eligibility of a mitigation program and demonstrate gaps in services. Findings will feed into the white paper, with the broader review expected to conclude by spring 2027.
- State Data Coordination: Andrew Altevogt (State Water Board) shared an update on in-progress work led by the Division of Drinking Water's Needs Assessment group, in coordination with OEHHA and DWR, examining domestic well and state small water system data. The group has reviewed existing datasets and their use cases, identified data gaps, and is developing a list of proposed strategies to address them. A draft document is currently under internal review, with plans to bring it to the full DRIP Collaborative in the near future. Andrew noted this data-focused effort complements the Roles and Responsibilities work by clarifying what data currently exists and what is still needed.

Julie walked through the outline for the Roles and Responsibilities white paper:

- I. Introduction: Covers the problem and background: the need for clarifying roles and responsibilities, and the implications of leaving the status quo in place. It also lays out the process and analysis goals, including the stated vision, current conditions and related gaps, and what can be done within existing structures to improve capacity and drought resilience.
- II. Collaborative Approach: Documents the participatory development process, including the framework and its key components, the investigative and mapping approach taken, and the participation of the DRIP Collaborative, subject matter experts, counties, and other interests.
- III. Overarching Findings: Expected to be the longest and most detailed section. It will draw on the laws and programs reviewed earlier in the year and highlight the most important findings from the full body of work. Key learnings are anticipated to include themes

around resources and funding for coordination, local engagement, and scale, among others still emerging as the process continues.

- IV. State & Local Observations: Covers what currently exists at the state level and observations of its limitations, as well as what exists at the local level, including geographic variation and observed limitations.
- V. Appendix: Provides a detailed description of the underlying analysis, including the plans and resources reviewed for response actions and programs: GSP domestic well mitigation plans, County SB 552 drought resilience plans, the water quality testing program inventory, and the county water quality capacity assessment (SAFER/OEHHA).

A full draft of the white paper is anticipated to be shared with the DRIP Collaborative ahead of the October meeting.