



**Kaweah Water  
Foundation**

**Safe Drinking Water Public Workshop Series  
PART ONE SUMMARY**

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR DRINKING WATER:  
NITRATES IN THE KAWEAH AREA**

Workshops held January 7 & 16, 2021

*Summary prepared by the Sacramento State Consensus and Collaboration Program*

## Overview

The Kaweah Water Foundation (KWF) held a series of workshops in early 2021 to provide information on nitrate contamination in drinking water supplies in the Kaweah area and gather input from stakeholders on emergency and interim drinking water solutions for nitrate-impacted users. These meetings will inform development of the Early Action Plan (EAP), one of the components of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's Nitrate Control Program.

All workshops were held remotely using Zoom webinar due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. These workshops are one among a variety of ways that stakeholders can access information from and share feedback with KWF; see below for other options stakeholders can use.

The Part One workshop provided information about nitrate contamination in the Kaweah Water Foundation's service area and how stakeholders can get involved in development of the Early Action Plan (EAP). The Part One workshop was held twice, on Thursday, January 7, and Saturday, January 16, 2021, in order to provide stakeholders with more opportunities to participate. Both Part One workshops had identical presentations. Each time it was presented, the workshop was offered in both English and Spanish through separate, concurrent meetings. The January 7<sup>th</sup> meeting had 22 participants in the English session and two participants in the Spanish session. The January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting had three participants in the English session and one participant in the Spanish session. Substantive questions and comments from participants were shared across both the English and Spanish sessions, as were the KWF's responses.

Recordings of the meetings can be accessed online through the KWF Outreach page at <http://kaweahwater.org/outreach.html>.

## Workshop Summary

### Welcome & Introductions

KWF staff opened the meeting, welcoming participants and sharing context, objectives, and a broad overview of the workshop. Facilitators from the Sacramento State Consensus and Collaboration Program gave participation instructions for the remote participation platform for both video conference and phone-only participants. Participants were invited to introduce themselves, if they felt comfortable doing so; participants were also able to remain anonymous.

In addition to the current workshop, participants were encouraged to keep informed and share thoughts and concerns using the following channels:

- Attend a workshop that matches your drinking water source to discuss potential solutions

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- Public Water Systems Workshop
  - Tuesday, January 19, 5-7 p.m.
- Private Domestic Well Workshop
  - Sunday, January 31, 2-4 p.m.
- Share your thoughts or concerns in English or Spanish by:
  - Submitting responses in a post-workshop survey
  - Completing an Impacted Resident survey at [www.kaweahwater.org](http://www.kaweahwater.org)
  - Sending an email to [admin@kaweahwater.org](mailto:admin@kaweahwater.org)
  - Calling Kaweah Water Foundation at 559-325-4463 to discuss or leave a voicemail
  - Sending a letter to Kaweah Water Foundation at 130 N. Garden Street, Visalia, CA 93291
  - Messaging Kaweah Water Foundation on Facebook or Instagram
- Keep informed of progress by:
  - Following Kaweah Water Foundation on social media
    - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kaweahwaterfoundation>
    - Instagram: [@kaweahwaterfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/kaweahwaterfoundation)
  - Visiting the Kaweah Water Foundation website for updates on meetings and plan progress: <http://kaweahwater.org/>
  - Signing up for e-mail list to receive updates: <http://kaweahwater.org/phone/contact.html>
  - Calling Kaweah Water Foundation for information: 559-325-4463

### Understanding Your Drinking Water

The workshop presentation included five sections:

- Section 1. Groundwater 101: Where Does My Drinking Water Come From?
- Section 2. Groundwater 102: Groundwater Quality
- Section 3. Nitrate 101
- Section 4. Is My Water Safe to Drink?
- Section 5. Drinking Water Solutions for Drinking Water with High Nitrates

Section 1 explained where tap water comes from, what groundwater is and where it comes from, how groundwater is used for drinking water, and how wells provide water.

Section 2 covered groundwater quality, including what chemicals are, what minerals are, what is in groundwater, how chemicals end up in groundwater, whether chemicals and minerals in groundwater can be harmful, and which chemicals found in some local drinking water supplies have potential health impacts, including nitrates.

Section 3 explained basics of nitrates, sources of nitrates in groundwater, safe concentrations of nitrates in drinking water, safe and unsafe uses of water with nitrate levels above 10 mg/L, and possible health impacts of nitrate.

Section 4 covered drinking water safety, explaining what contaminants are, types of contaminants, drinking water safety, maximum contaminant levels (MCLs), and how residents can determine whether their drinking water is safe, whether it is from a public water system or from a domestic well.

Section 5 presented potential short-term solutions for drinking water high in nitrates, including bottled water, reverse osmosis systems, and free drinking water kiosks, shared the locations of two existing free drinking water kiosks, and outlined ways that residents could stay informed of and provide feedback on development of the Early Action Plan (see above).

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Between presentation sections and after the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions or share comments. Clarifying questions were addressed when they were asked; others were gathered to be shared and responded to in coordination between the English and Spanish meetings.

#### Responding to Questions and Comments

After taking a short break, KWF staff shared key themes heard from the comments and questions gathered. Then the facilitators shared the questions and comments from both the Spanish and English meetings, and KWF staff answered each question. Participants were invited to share additional questions and comments. All questions, comments, and responses are summarized below.

Participants were reminded of ways to keep informed and share thoughts and concerns (see above). In the second part of the workshop, KWF shared a “call to action” for participants to invite additional stakeholders, particularly from impacted communities, to the series’ Part Two workshops for community water systems users and domestic well users, to share feedback through the channels outlined above, and/or to invite KWF staff to give a presentation to community organizations they are involved in.

The formal portion of the workshop was then adjourned; participants were invited to stay on the line to continue the discussion informally.

#### Informal Discussion Time with Team Members

KWF staff remained in the workshops to continue to hear comments and answer questions in a more informal way.

## Summary of Questions & Comments

### Session 1 (January 7, 2021)

#### Questions and Answers

- Which areas and communities does KWF most need participation and input from?
  - KWF: We would like to engage with all impacted users. We will complete the Early Action Plan in March but will continue to engage with local communities as we work toward long-term solutions as well.
- When will results from the domestic water testing program be available? Will the results be reported to homeowners? Will the records be public?
  - KWF: Details of the domestic water testing program are still being finalized. Results will be shared with the water users, and additional reporting requirements may be tied to the testing program’s funding source. KWF is exploring funding options available through Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER), from the SB 200 Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, or others.
- How might landowners in the Kaweah Basin be impacted by implementation of this new Nitrate Control regulation? Will there be a cost to landowners to provide long-term drinking water solutions? How do legacy or naturally occurring contaminants factor into the solution for this issue?
  - KWF: This project is funded by nitrate dischargers who received a Notice to Comply from the Regional Water Quality Control board and who have chosen to comply through Pathway B, a management zone. Current membership of the KWF Board includes representatives from irrigated agriculture and dairy/bovine operations. Future membership may include representatives from water treatment and food processing

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facilities. KWF is also working to leverage funding from other sources, such as SAFER funds.

- Does this program address other, non-groundwater sources of nitrate exposure, such as dietary consumption of certain types of vegetables which are naturally high in nitrate?
  - KWF: No, this program focuses specifically on providing drinking water solutions for residents whose drinking water has nitrate levels above the MCL of 10mg/L.
- Will KWF conduct outreach that proactively targets stakeholders whose drinking water comes from public water systems that are above the nitrate MCL, for example sending flyers about the upcoming workshops to those residents?
  - KWF: KWF is currently working to finalize the list of which public water systems meet and which exceed the legal drinking water standard for nitrate. KWF will share this information through multiple communication channels once it is finalized.
- How many participants in the meeting are from the local community?
  - KWF: These workshops do not require registration and participants may choose to remain anonymous, so we do not know the affiliations of individual participants.
- What resources are being used to reach the community and let them know about these meetings?
  - KWF: A variety of outreach methods were used. Flyers were posted in post offices, schools, and local markets. Information on the workshops was also shared with local media outlets. Community organizations, such as Community Water Center, Self-Help Enterprises, Leadership Counsel, Farm Bureau, County of Tulare, and others, were asked to share information about the workshops with their members and contact lists. Over 1,000 postcards were mailed to local residents. Social media marketing reached over 1,300 people.

#### Comments

- The MCL for nitrate is 10 mg/L of nitrate as nitrogen, or 45 mg/L as nitrite.
- CalWater customers in Visalia and Goshen, as well as those connected to CalWater's small systems in Porterville (Mullen) and Tulare (Tulco) can access Consumer Confidence Reports at <https://www.calwater.com/waterquality/water-quality-reports/vis/>

#### Session 2 (January 16, 2021)

##### Questions and Answers

- Many families are experiencing continued impacts from drought, such as lack of access to water. While residents are being metered and taking up efforts to minimize water use, entities such as the County of Visalia are overusing water. Additionally other actions are being taken that may worsen the impacts, such as removal of trees and other vegetation. What can be done on a regional level to alleviate the lack of precipitation and its impacts?
  - KWF: The California State Legislature enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act to reduce and address impacts of overuse of groundwater sources. While KWF's focus is on providing drinking water solutions for residents whose water has nitrate levels that exceed the drinking water standards, KWF recognizes the significant challenges of managing groundwater supplies and is coordinating with local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies.
- How safe is Visalia's drinking water? Should residents use a filter or replacement water?
  - KWF: The city of Visalia's drinking water currently meets all drinking water standards, including the nitrate standard. The water from the tap is safe to drink and cook

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with. Some people may choose to use filters to eliminate unwanted tastes, which may be present even in some water that is safe to drink. The Consumer Confidence Report for the City of Visalia can be accessed in Spanish at

[https://www.calwater.com/docs/ccr/2019/vis-vis-2019\\_spanish.pdf](https://www.calwater.com/docs/ccr/2019/vis-vis-2019_spanish.pdf)

- When will the domestic well testing program be available?
  - KWF: Our target for the program is June 2021.
- Is there any research addressing how to get rid of the nitrate contamination in the groundwater supplies?
  - KWF: Nitrates already concentrated in the aquifer are very difficult to get rid of. Currently technology has not yet been able to address nitrates below the surface. There are currently programs and regulations in place to limit additional nitrates entering the aquifer, which could make contamination worse. One such effort works with farmers to help them account for the nitrate already present in the groundwater supplies they apply to their crops and reduce additional nitrates added as fertilizer.
- Do the existing kiosks use reverse osmosis filtration?
  - KWF: Both of the existing kiosks are connected to a water source (a well or a public water system) that already meets State drinking water standards, so no there are no reverse osmosis filters used. In some cases, sand filters and/or UV filters are used to prevent other types of contamination, such as to prevent bacteria growth within the kiosk.
- If a kiosk is installed in a community, will it be connected to a new well?
  - KWF: Determining the best solution for each community is complicated. A well-supplied kiosk would not be put into a community where the well water does not meet drinking water standards. It is possible to use reverse osmosis for kiosk water, as is done in many water vending machines, however this requires a larger storage tank. These questions will all depend on the local residents and the State Water Board Division of Drinking Water.

## Post-Workshop Evaluation & Modifications Made

Participants provided post-workshop feedback; the feedback and associated modifications made are summarized below.

### Technical Issues and Preferences

- Community leader who speaks Spanish unable to access webinar.
  - Removed passcodes from subsequent meetings.
  - Outreach materials updated to center phone access instructions and provide clear step-by-step instructions in Spanish and English for connecting via phone.
  - Updated outreach materials to highlight access phone numbers that did not encounter glitches.
  - Zoom webinar technical assistance contacted
  - Called person who could not connect and confirmed she had correct phone number and Webinar ID number during second Part One workshop
- Preference for Zoom Meeting vs. Zoom Webinar in order to be able to see other participants rather than only the presenters.
  - Offered to make all attendees panelists; participants who did not actively affirm interest in being made into a panelist could remain as attendees.
  - Provided opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.

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- Gave a deeper review of the Zoom Webinar platform at the beginning of the meeting to clarify key differences in functionality from Zoom Meeting, for those more used to that interface.
- Potential technical challenges for phone-only participation.
  - Repeat phone participation instructions throughout meeting at all Q&A opportunities.
  - Emphasized availability of bilingual technical assistance phone line
  - Outreach materials updated to center phone access instructions and provide clear step-by-step instructions in Spanish and English for connecting via phone.
  - Facilitators and presenters shared auditory cues about what is going on in the Zoom platform, for example describing how many people had joined the webinar, visual content of slides, slide number and content of any discussion in the chat panel.

**Format**

- Had anyone joined by phone, the first Part One workshop presentation would have been difficult to follow, particularly for those not using the Zoom app to see the shared screen.
  - Facilitators and presenters shared auditory cues about what is going on in the Zoom platform, for example sharing slide numbers and titles and describing the visual content of slides.
- Simultaneous translation was cumbersome and at times ineffective.
  - Contracted an outside translator and used consecutive, rather than simultaneous, translation.
  - Used a dedicated slide deck for each language, rather than both languages on each slide.
  - Coordinated question responses during a mid-meeting break and then answered all the questions in each meeting separately, rather than linking the two meetings after the break.
- Long presentation without breaks or opportunity to ask clarifying questions.
  - Paused for clarifying questions between each presentation module .
- Too much down-time waiting for Q&A.
  - Shortened mid-meeting break.

**Content**

- Share timeline related to well testing program, who will get notified and how the public can (or can't) access the results.
  - Will be shared and discussed in Part Two: Domestic Well Users workshop

**Outreach**

- Identify communities of known concern with limited participation/input.
  - Agree that in-person outreach would be most effective but not possible during COVID-19 stay-at-home order
- Meeting participants may be able to help bring other stakeholders into the process.
  - Added a “call to action” at the end of the meeting, inviting participants to bring other stakeholders to the Part 2 meetings, encourage others to share input through other channels, and invite KWF to give a presentation to community organizations that they are a part of.

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