



**Kaweah Water
Foundation**

**Safe Drinking Water Public Workshop Series
PART TWO SUMMARY – DOMESTIC WELL USERS**

**SHORT-TERM DRINKING WATER SOLUTIONS FOR
DOMESTIC WELL USERS**

Workshops held January 31 & February 5, 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 KWF's 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 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.

Part Two of the workshop series included two meetings providing information and gathering input about short-term drinking water solutions for people whose water is impacted by nitrates. This workshop was focused on domestic well users; the first Part Two workshop focused on residents that are hooked up to a State small or community water system. Due to a technical issue, the workshop was offered only in English on the originally scheduled date of January 31st; it was offered in Spanish via Facebook on the rescheduled date of February 5th. A bilingual technical assistance helpline was available throughout the originally scheduled meeting time and no stakeholders attempting to access the Spanish meeting contacted the helpline. The English meeting had seven participants and the Spanish meeting had five participants.

Recordings of both meetings can be accessed online through the KWF Outreach page at <https://kawahwater.wpcomstaging.com/learn-more/>.

Workshop Summary

Welcome & Introductions

KWF staff opened the meeting, welcoming participants and sharing context, objectives, and a broad overview of the workshop. In the English meeting, a facilitator 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. In the English meeting, KWF staff gave a presentation; in the Spanish meeting, a professional interpreter from Lingüística Interpretation and Translation gave the presentation. The presentation shared information about the Foundation, including its mission and service area. It also shared

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how community feedback would be used, emphasizing that it would inform development and implementation of the EAP and help shape local solutions for nitrate-impacted drinking water.

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

- Share your thoughts or concerns in English or Spanish by:
 - Completing an Impacted Resident survey at www.kaweahwater.org
 - Sending an email to 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: <https://kaweahwater.wpcomstaging.com/>
 - Calling Kaweah Water Foundation for information: 559-325-4463

Participants were also encouraged to view recordings of the other workshops in the series through the outreach page of the KWF website.

Understanding Your Drinking Water

The workshop presentation included four sections:

- Section 1. Review: Understanding Your Drinking Water
- Section 2. Domestic Wells & Nitrate Impacted Drinking Water
- Section 3. Which Domestic Wells are Impacted by Nitrate
- Section 4. Solutions for Nitrate-Impacted Drinking Water

Section 1 reviewed key information shared in the Part One workshops, such as where tap water comes from, what groundwater is and what is in it, whether chemicals and minerals in groundwater can be harmful, which chemicals found in some local drinking water supplies have potential health impacts, what nitrate is, and what are sources of nitrates in groundwater.

Section 2 provided information about how domestic wells provide drinking water, how to determine whether domestic well water is safe to drink, how to test domestic wells for water quality, how to understand a well sampling report, and what well sampling programs residents may be able to access. It also provided information on nitrate contamination specifically, including possible health impacts of nitrate and what users should do if their water is impacted.

Section 3 presented maps showing known nitrate exceedances and the locations of the estimated 922 domestic wells in the KWF service area that are likely impacted by nitrate. KWF staff noted that nitrate impacts are widespread throughout the service area and emphasized that domestic well water may differ between neighbors so the only way to know whether one's domestic well water is safe to drink is through well sampling.

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Section 4 presented possible solutions for those impacted by nitrate exceedances. Potential short-term solutions include bottled water, reverse osmosis filtration systems, free drinking water kiosks, or a combination of these solutions. The presentation shared pros and cons of each and provided information about two currently available free drinking water kiosks in the service area. Possible future long-term solutions for impacted communities include drilling a new community well, improving treatment systems, consolidating with larger water systems, and blending impacted water with water from other wells. The drinking water solution selection process will be based on a combination of three factors: technical viability, drinking water safety, and community preference. Next steps in the KWF action plan include beginning a domestic well testing program in May and June 2021, as well as beginning to receive bottled water delivery applications during that same timeframe. Depending on community interest and technical viability, additional kiosks may be constructed between 2021 and 2022. Outreach and communications with impacted stakeholders will continue throughout.

Responding to Questions and Comments

Participants were invited to ask questions or share comments between presentation sections and after the presentation.

Participants were also asked to provide input on the replacement water options, with the following questions to prompt the discussion:

- What situations make a solution more attractive to you?
- What criteria (pros and cons) are the most important to you?
- What do you need to know to guide your preference?
- How would you like to be updated on KWF's replacement water plan and progress?

All comments and questions, as well as responses from KWF, are summarized below.

Participants were also invited to share additional input through the stakeholder survey, available in both English (<https://forms.gle/vYsbGXpzkMFu8zJeA>) and Spanish (<https://forms.gle/8ZU8jZpeL377SdLv8>). KWF staff reminded participants of how their feedback would inform local solutions to nitrate-impacted drinking water and of how they can keep informed and share thoughts and concerns (see above). KWF shared a “call to action” for participants to invite additional stakeholders, particularly from impacted communities, to share feedback through the survey and the other channels outlined above. The first round of feedback, for inclusion in EAP development, is needed by February 17, 2021; additional feedback is welcome and will be included in future plans. KWF staff emphasized that while the EAP will be completed shortly, it is only the first step of a long-term project that will expand over multiple decades. Continued dialogue and feedback will be critical to ensuring that the process can be responsive to impacted communities.

Summary of Questions & Comments

Questions and Answers

- What is the most common way that people find out that they need to use replacement water?
 - KWF: Currently, Self Help Enterprises is a key source of information on water quality for domestic well users. KWF can help users access the information they need to determine their water quality and its free domestic well testing program will begin in May/June 2021. KWF is also working with the Tulare County Health Department on outreach to domestic well users. For those whose water comes from public water system users, water quality information is available through the water systems' Consumer Confidence Reports.

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- What does KWF believe would be the most ideal long-term replacement drinking water solution?
 - KWF: Long-term solutions will involve technical studies to determine the sources of nitrate contamination in the KWF service area, working to repair and restore the aquifer, working with impacted communities and community-based organizations to define the best solutions for them, and hopefully finding solutions that are also financially viable.
- How much time will there be for public comment once the EAP is released?
 - KWF: The administrative draft EAP, which will incorporate feedback gathered through this workshop series and the other channels reviewed above, will be released for review on February 22nd. The deadline for the final EAP is March 8th, so feedback will need to be received prior to that in order to be incorporated.
- Were there any Spanish-speaking stakeholders who attempted but were unable to join the original Spanish meeting, where the technical difficulties were encountered?
 - KWF: No calls were received on the technical assistance line that was available for anyone encountering challenges connecting to any of the workshops in the series; the phone number was publicized throughout the outreach for the workshop series and was accessed during a previous workshop in the series. Additionally, the interpreter from the Spanish meeting was available in the English meeting to provide assistance to anyone needing Spanish-language support who accessed the English meeting; no participants made this request. As noted above, the Spanish workshop was rescheduled for February 5th and was held via Facebook in order to improve accessibility.

Post-Workshop Evaluation & Modifications Made

Outreach & Participation

- Outreach may not be reaching additional stakeholders, as the English workshop participants appeared to be consistent across the workshops. There has been low turnout from the Spanish-speaking community in particular.
 - As noted above, the rescheduled Spanish language workshop was presented via Facebook live, a different platform that may be more familiar and accessible to some stakeholders.
- It is helpful that KWF makes videos of the workshop accessible after the fact so that the workshop can continue to have value; the presentations are excellent. Given the low turnout from Spanish-speaking stakeholders, it will be particularly important to provide the Spanish-language meeting video online for review later. Consider posting the videos on social media and working with others, such as Tulare County Health and Human Services, to promote the videos through their social media accounts as well.
 - Recordings of all of the workshops, including both languages, are available at the KWF website. KWF will continue to post videos so that stakeholders can access the content at their convenience. The recording of the Facebook-based Spanish meeting is also available via the KWF Facebook page. Advisory Committee members were encouraged to like and share the Facebook Live workshop on their organizations' Facebook pages.
- It is helpful that the workshops were offered on a variety of times and days of the week, though turnout remained low.
- Consider providing these presentations in existing community spaces such as community centers or libraries.
 - A component of the “call to action” shared in the workshops was for participants to share any community organizations they are a part of where KWF could provide a presentation

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directly to stakeholders in the venues where they already meet. To date, KWF has been invited to provide a presentation outside of its own workshops at the Ivanhoe Community Council meeting and the AGUA Coalition meeting.

- Consider providing an incentive for participation in these workshops.
- It was good that KWF was transparent about the technical issues encountered, made repeated attempts to solve the technical issues in the moment, and provided multiple options for people to receive assistance.
- The webinar link was hard to find.
 - The KWF website was adjusted multiple times to make the webinar links easier to identify and will be further adjusted for future workshops.
- Consider adding a calendar item option so that people can receive calendar notifications and have the Zoom link easily on hand.
 - Given the short timeline for the workshop series, outreach efforts had to be carefully targeted and focused on lower-tech methods such as dropping off physical flyers in community spaces in impacted communities. For future workshops, KWF will add more outreach components, such as embedded calendar links.

Content & Structure

- The workshop should directly address the longer-term plans for addressing nitrate contamination in drinking water supplies. For example, long-term solutions include: KWF could facilitate existing water systems to get grants or KWF can apply for grants; KWF could offset O&M costs; KWF could provide domestic well assessments and recommendations (wellhead protection, no sanitary seal, well depth, treatment, etc.).
- The presentation and content were excellent, evolving and building on past workshops.
- Use a single workshop for both languages, with translation within the single workshop.
 - The structure with two simultaneous workshops was created because participants who access a Zoom meeting by phone only are unable to utilize the translation service and KWF was committed to ensuring that stakeholders could access both languages, regardless of internet access. If future meetings must be held remotely, KWF may consider other formats, such as using an audio-only conference line that would allow participants to choose their language, as is done by some of the community-based organizations that KWF has heard from.
- Consider using polls or breakout rooms, as well as using more specific discussion prompts, to make the meeting more interactive.
 - The Part Two meetings included specific discussion prompts. Polls and breakout rooms were not used in order to ensure that phone-only participants were able to participate as fully as those using the Zoom app.
- Remove the break during the meeting; it is not needed and makes the meeting longer.
 - This change was made following the Part One workshops based on participant feedback.
- Clarify the difference between MCLs for nitrate and nitrate as nitrogen.
 - Following the State Water Board Office of Public Participation and Tulare County guidance on accessibility, the meeting materials were intentionally kept at a 4th grade level and using plain language.
- Technical items were presented well and not overly complex or technical for the general public.
- Workshops should be shortened to less than one hour.

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- The later workshops were shortened; most Part Two workshops were around one hour.

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