State Water Resources Control Board
SAFER Drinking Water Advisory Group Meeting #3
Meeting Notes | April 30, 2020

Agenda

Time	Topic
9:30am	**Welcome and Meeting Logistics**
9:35am	**Introductions & Warmer**
9:45am	**SAFER Review and Updates**
9:50am	**Fund Expenditure Plan (FEP)** 1. Breakout Session 1: Water systems needs 2. Large group report out 3. Breakout Session 2: Proposed distribution of funding 4. Large group report out
11:20am	**Public Comment**
11:50am	**Closing Remarks & Next Steps**
12:00pm	**Adjourn**

SAFER Program Attendees

Advisory Group Members

1. Horacio Amezquita
2. Sergio Carranza
3. Michael Claiborne
4. David Cory
5. Benjamin Cuevas
6. Castulo Estrada
7. Lucy Hernandez
8. Don James
9. Ramon Prado (Absent)
10. Everett McGhee
11. Maria Olivera
12. Camille Pannu
13. Katie Porter
14. Elena Saldivar
15. Nicholas Schneider
16. Jessi Snyder
17. Isabel Solorio
18. Dawn White
19. Emily Rooney (Absent)

State Waterboard Staff

- **Board Chair** Joaquin Esquivel
- **Board Member** Laurel Firestone
- **OPP:** Entire office (11)
- **DDW:** Michelle Frederick
- **DFA:** Joe Karkoski, Jasmine Oaxaca
- **OCC:** Anne Hartridge, Julia Nick

Meeting Overview

Advisory Group members provided feedback on the following Safe and Affordable Dirking Water Fund (Fund) Expenditure Plan (Plan) topics:

Drinking Water System Funding Needs

Staff compiled information on failing and at-risk systems that estimates of the cost of potential solutions. Funding needs exceed the amount of money available from the Fund and other DFA sources. The Plan must indicate how much funding will be allocated for each type of drinking water solution. Guiding Questions:

- What questions/comments do you have about current and future funding needs?
- What is the best way to share the information staff compiled?
- What additional information should be included?

Proposed Distribution of Funding

Staff developed a draft budget that outlines the proposed distribution of funds for FY 20/21. Guiding Questions:

- Does the draft budget align with the needs of communities?
- Should any categories be allocated more/less funding?

Takeaways

In general, there was a feeling that the draft budget does not align with community needs, but there was not consensus on how to reallocate funds to better align with those needs. Two examples:

1. Some members felt there was not enough funding for construction, while others felt the construction funds should be shifted to help state smalls and domestic wells.
2. Some members felt the administrator allocation was too high for the first year, while others recommended shifting money for interim solutions in at-risk communities to fund more administrators.

These examples highlight the varying needs throughout the state and the challenges of developing a comprehensive plan.

Members understand there will be a balance between funding interim and long-term solutions—more money for interim means less for long-term, but they want to make sure we are addressing immediate needs quickly while stretching the money as far as possible to get to long-term solutions.

Overall, members agreed that 1) the at-risk systems list is incomplete (missing data and systems; e.g., state smalls and domestic wells), 2) we need a process for systems that aren't covered in this data snapshot, and 3) we need to assure quality of data before releasing information.

Meeting Summary

Advisory Group Recommendations: Fund Expenditure Plan (FEP)

1. Have water projects that have not been identified so that Board Staff can propose consolidation. While consolidation is taking place, Board Staff should think of what to do with projects in the meantime. There should be a mechanism to allow application submission for this type of situation.
2. Advisory Group Members would like to understand how much the cumulative sum of funding beyond SAFER is available in order to better inform how to allocate SAFER funds. Know how big these buckets are.
3. Clarify what Technical Assistance encompasses.
4. Try to close the gap between the HRTW list and existing funding.
5. Community members were lost with how information was communicated. How can we make information more friendly? Working with community members, we need to build trust, and part of that is communicating effectively.
6. At-risk systems should provide bottled water. $10 million doesn't cover systems for bottled water, move it to another category.

Advisory Group Questions: FEP

1. Once funding is available- how can the Board Staff expedite getting those funds to communities to get those projects moving forward?
2. Can Advisory Group Members get a sense of what other funding pots are for different categories?
3. Community engagement as a category was missing, Advisory Group Members would like to know how much funding is being allocated for this category.
4. It is not clear who or what communities are getting money. Is there a list of state smalls and public domestic wells? Most of these are more the 15 connections, the need is great for 15 connections.
5. How will the fund be distributed? By Counties? Region? $130 million will go fast. Good idea to know how this will be done over various regions.
6. Community engagement as a category was missing, Advisory Group Members would like to know how much funding is being allocated for this category.
7. How can Board Staff make this information more friendly and accessible to community members? Transparency is highly valued. Can information be easily understood? Board Staff should be able to track progress through this.
8. Is the $2.2 million pilot project to include homelessness?
9. Is it effective to spend money on opening wells if the water comes out contaminated?
10. How do we keep these systems off the list? Looking at projects and how they're funded. How do we put in solutions or pay attention to solutions that will keep systems off the list in the future?
11. Why are there 3 different definitions for at-risk?
12. How is TMA measured?

13. What are cumulative funds for each potential solution so we can understand how big the need is?
14. Are funding pots based on these spreadsheets or based on what the overall plan is for the solution?
15. Can we spread the amount allocated for the 18,000 households?
16. Once funding is available- how do we expedite getting those funds to communities to get those projects moving forward?

Advisory Group Feedback: FEP

1. Tools need to be user friendly for community members to understand the information.
2. At-Risk Systems list is missing data/systems including state smalls and domestic wells.
3. Spreadsheets should include column totals (cumulative amounts), breakdowns of funding by county, region, and include a readiness number indicating where the system is in the process, as well as include information about the systems (classification, are they disadvantaged?).
4. Board Staff should perform data quality control prior to releasing information.
5. Funding distribution is not in alignment with community needs.
6. Allocate more money for bottled water in at-risk communities and private/small wells.
7. Explain what other pots of money are available for water systems and projects in addition to SAFER.
8. Tension of interim and long-term solutions for categories: putting more money into interim, could result in having less money for long-term. But there is more need than what is even allocated for interim solutions and would like to stretch the dollar as far as possible.
9. Due to COVID-19, increase funding to help pay for water bills.
10. Board Staff should consider the names/title on table "At-Risk Water Systems" spreadsheet. Not all of the listed systems are at-risk water systems, and not all at-risk systems are listed there.
11. Clarification: the spreadsheet is not a list of projects in the queue per say. This spreadsheet is not earmarking funding and solutions. In order to qualify for the fund- you need to be on this spreadsheet though.
12. List is not inclusive of the systems that need some help, the list is not a list of earmark projects, how those systems will make it to the list, how the tools will drive the needs assessment, what the tools are and put the list together.
13. Small amount in construction, there was clarification provided about additional pots of funding available (available loans).
14. Some contracts are locked in for 2 years and then rolled over.
15. Proposed funding is not in alignment with community needs; more information and consideration is needed.
16. $3 million allocated for workforce development looks good.

17. Some kind of timeline would help and totals for each of the columns on spread sheet.
18. Concerned about receiving $4 million+ for construction; people in the community will not be able to afford the water.
19. More workshops like Apr 17th workshop that get into weeds of what tools are and how they get put together would be helpful.
20. List was not inclusive of all systems Advisory Group Members know are out there and need help.
21. Clarification needed for risk; definition of risk is noted on 4 different spots and it is different for each spot.

State Waterboard Staff Action Items
1. Improve interpretation services for instructions and slides.
2. Verify Interpreter audio is ready and monitored throughout the meeting.
3. Provide audio check 30 minutes (instead of 15 minutes) before scheduled webinar to ensure the event starts on time.
4. Extend breakout sessions.
5. Include meeting evaluation as a poll in the webinar meeting.
6. Reframe questions for more precise answers.

Public Comment

- Add funding for upcoming needs, such as those systems nearing violation status.
- The potential of Construction funding is viewed as repayable loans, principal forgiveness like a grant.
- There are 2 numbers working at the same time. A project may take more than 1 year and not need allocation for the next year.
- When it comes down to finalizing the FEP, we hope data from systems from smalls and domestic wells will be grounded and have a clear idea of funding needs.
- FEP is a critical part to efforts related to the fund. Administering, tracking, monitoring funding is important. Estimating what funding need looks like is incredibly important.
- Safe to drink portal for CA water monitoring council working group. Suggest that if there's an opportunity to collaborate with them, Board Staff should discuss public drinking water statewide and give it context and narrative. Making these documents more user friendly and accessible.
- Due to current COVID crisis, funding sources are facing additional stress. Operations & Maintenance support may need increasing funds as a result since some folks cannot pay water bill at this time. This needs to be included as part of overall water funding plan. This fund is intended to fill gaps not filled by other sources. Other funding sources have been mentioned during this meeting.
- It is important to look beyond rates only & consider the full, true cost burden on all residents for water service. The parts are:
  1. The fixed cost (water meter charge); plus
  2. The variable cost (the rate charged per unit of water used); plus,
  3. Taxes & Assessments (costs paid to the water provider by property owners, including homeowners & landlords who pass this cost along to their renters).

These cost components together determine the total amount charged for water-related services which residents pay to the water provider (either through their rent, their water bill, &/or their property tax bill).