



Media Release

State Water Board helps Fort Bragg launch desalination system in innovative response to drought emergency

Expedited funding helped project move swiftly

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FORT BRAGG – With its water supplies diminished by drought and climate change, the City of Fort Bragg is launching a desalination-reverse osmosis system that can treat up to 144,000 gallons per day using funding from the State Water Resources Control Board.

The system will treat water from the Noyo River. Saltwater intrusion during high tide can render the water unsuitable for drinking. The river is the largest of the city's three surface water sources, and the ongoing drought reduced flows to such a degree this summer that Fort Bragg's water system, serving nearly 3,000 customer connections, was faced with pulling water from its emergency reservoir to bolster its supply. Instead, the city pursued using desalination to extract more drinking water supplies from the river and sought emergency funding from the State Water Board to do so.

"Fort Bragg came to us with a creative solution, and our team worked with them to address any obstacles to making it happen quickly," said Joe Karkoski, deputy director of the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance. "Expedited approvals through our Emergency Drinking Water Program allow us to help people in communities like Fort Bragg who are struggling with drought impacts."

The board is funding 100% of Fort Bragg's grant request of \$691,796, which includes the desalination unit as well as a shallow groundwater well treatment system that can produce 57,000 gallons of water a day. The city initially applied for funding in late May, which the board granted. The State Water Board also provided technical assistance to help the city determine the permitting and specification requirements for the desalination unit. By September 24, the desalination unit was delivered to the city. Start-up testing began September 30 and the unit is expected to be running at or near capacity in the coming days.

"Due to the dire water shortages facing our water customers, the city's water system is using technology and innovation to help us through this drought," said John Smith, director of Public Works for the City of Fort Bragg. "The support and technical guidance



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from the State Water Board has helped take this from idea to reality in a matter of months.”

Fort Bragg’s new desalination unit is properly sized to release desalinated water into a raw water pond that flows into the city’s existing full-sized treatment plant. Mounted on a concrete skid, it can produce 200 gallons a minute of desalinated water. With a maximum running time of 12 hours per day, the unit can process 144,000 gallons in a twenty-four-hour period.

In addition to the desalination project in Fort Bragg, the board is funding drought assistance projects for other cities, water systems, and households throughout the state to repair or replace wells, provide hauled or bottled water, install point-of-use treatment systems, conduct well testing and provide technical assistance. So far, the board has committed \$1.5 million directly to cities and water districts as well as another \$25.5 million to its established regional partnerships with Self-Help Enterprises, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Community Water Center and the California Rural Water Association over the past year. All funding is directed to help vulnerable communities respond to drinking water emergencies and build drought resilience.

The board is also coordinating with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to distribute \$200 million in funding to cities and local water districts through DWR’s [Small Community Drought Relief Program](#).

The State Water Board’s mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.