

Senate Bill No. 552
CHAPTER 245

An act to add Part 2.56 (commencing with Section 10609.50) to Division 6 of the Water Code,
relating to water.

[Approved by Governor September 23, 2021. Filed with Secretary of State September 23, 2021.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 552, Hertzberg. Drought planning: small water suppliers: nontransient noncommunity water systems.

Existing law declares that small water suppliers and rural communities are often not covered by established water shortage requirements, and that the state should provide guidance to improve drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities. Existing law required the Department of Water Resources, in consultation with the State Water Resources Control Board and other relevant state and local agencies and stakeholders, to use available data to identify, no later than January 1, 2020, small water suppliers and rural communities that may be at risk of drought and water shortage vulnerability. To implement this directive, the department formed a stakeholder advisory group, the County Drought Advisory Group. Existing law required the department, in consultation with the state board, to propose to the Governor and the Legislature, by January 1, 2020, recommendations and guidance relating to the development and implementation of countywide drought and water shortage contingency plans to address the planning needs of small water suppliers and rural communities, as provided.

This bill would require small water suppliers, as defined, serving 1,000 to 2,999 service connections, inclusive, and nontransient noncommunity water systems that are schools, no later than July 1, 2023, to develop and maintain an abridged Water Shortage Contingency Plan that includes specified drought-planning elements. The bill would require a small water supplier serving fewer than 1,000 service connections to add drought planning elements to its emergency notification or response plan and submit the plan to the state board. The bill would require these water systems to report annually specified water supply condition information to the state board through the state board's Electronic Annual Reporting System or other reporting tool, as directed by the state board. The bill would require small water suppliers and nontransient noncommunity water systems that are schools to implement, subject to funding availability, specified drought resiliency measures, including, among others, having at least one backup source of water supply and metering each service connection. The bill would exempt from these provisions small water suppliers, or small water suppliers integrated into larger water systems, that voluntarily choose to instead comply with specified existing law relating to urban water management plans.

This bill would require a county to establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county’s jurisdiction, as provided. The bill would authorize a county, in lieu of establishing a standing task force, to establish an alternative process that facilitates drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county’s jurisdiction, as provided. The bill would provide that a county that establishes a drought task force on or before January 1, 2022, shall be deemed in compliance with these requirements as long as the task force continues to exist. The bill would require a county to develop a plan that includes potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed interim and long-term solutions, as provided. Because the bill would impose additional duties on counties, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would require the department to take specified actions to support implementation of the recommendations from the County Drought Advisory Group. The bill would require the department to establish a standing interagency drought and water shortage task force to, among other things, facilitate proactive planning and coordination, both for predrought planning and postdrought emergency response, which shall consist of various representatives, including representatives from local governments. Because the bill would impose additional duties on local governments, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

DIGEST KEY

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

BILL TEXT

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1.

Part 2.56 (commencing with Section 10609.50) is added to Division 6 of the Water Code, to read:

PART 2.56. Drought Planning for Small Water Suppliers, State Small Water Systems, and Domestic Well Communities

CHAPTER 1. General Provisions

10609.50.

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Droughts are predicted to become more frequent, longer, and more severe as climate change progresses, putting drinking water supplies at risk of running dry or becoming contaminated.

(b) As demonstrated by the most recent drought from 2012 to 2016, inclusive, (2012–16 drought) drought conditions disproportionately impact low-income, small, and rural communities, as demonstrated by all of the following:

(1) (A) Rural communities are more likely to rely solely on groundwater from small water suppliers or domestic wells.

(B) Domestic wells tend to be shallower and are susceptible to running dry when groundwater is overpumped.

(2) (A) The 2012–16 drought negatively impacted over 480,000 people relying on drought-impacted public water systems.

(B) Seventy-six percent of impacted public water systems were small, serving 1,000 service connections or fewer and concentrated in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

(c) There are currently varying levels of water contingency planning and coverage across counties for small water suppliers and self-supplied communities, leaving hundreds of thousands of people at risk of going without water to meet their basic household and drinking water needs during the next drought.

(d) If another drought occurs that is as severe as the 2012–16 drought, more than 4,500 domestic wells in the San Joaquin Valley may be impacted. The cost to mitigate this damage could be more than one hundred fifteen million dollars (\$115,000,000).

(e) No one should go without running water during a drought. California can take basic steps to implement more proactive drought planning that would benefit the communities most at risk, and by doing so help prevent catastrophic impacts on drinking water for the communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

10609.51.

For purposes of this part, the following definitions apply:

(a) “Community water system” has the same meaning as defined in Section 116275 of the Health and Safety Code.

(b) “County Drought Advisory Group” means the group created by the department to implement Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 10609.40) of Part 2.55.

(c) “Department” means the Department of Water Resources.

(d) “Domestic well” has the same meaning as defined in Section 116681 of the Health and Safety Code.

(e) “Fund expenditure plan” means the fund expenditure plan established in Section 116768 of the Health and Safety Code.

- (f) "Groundwater sustainability agency" has the same meaning as defined in Section 10721.
- (g) "Nontransient noncommunity water system" has the same meaning as defined in Section 116275 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (h) "Public water system" has the same meaning as defined in Section 116275 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (i) "Risk vulnerability tool" means the tool created by the department to implement Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 10609.40) of Part 2.55.
- (j) "Rural community" means a community with fewer than 15 service connections, or regularly serving less than 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year.
- (k) "Small water supplier" means a community water system serving 15 to 2,999 service connections, inclusive, and that provides less than 3,000 acre-feet of water annually.
- (l) "State board" means the State Water Resources Control Board.
- (m) "State small water system" has the same meaning as defined in Section 116275 of the Health and Safety Code.

CHAPTER 2. Small Water Suppliers and Nontransient Noncommunity Water Systems

10609.60.

(a) No later than July 1, 2023, and updated every five years thereafter, a small water supplier serving 1,000 to 2,999 service connections, inclusive, and a nontransient noncommunity water system that is a school shall each develop and maintain, onsite, an abridged Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) that includes, at a minimum, all of the following drought-planning elements:

(1) Drought-planning contacts, including all of the following:

(A) At least one contact at the water system for water shortage planning and response and the development of the plan.

(B) Contacts for local public safety partners and potential vendors that can provide repairs or alternative water sources, including, but not limited to, local community-based organizations that work with the population in and around areas served by the water system, contractors for drilling wells, vended water suppliers, and emergency shower vendors.

(C) State and local agency contacts who should be informed when a drought or water shortage emergency is emerging or has occurred.

(D) Regional water planning groups or mutual aid networks, to the extent they exist.

(2) Triggering mechanisms and levels for action, including both of the following:

(A) Standard water shortage levels corresponding to progressive ranges based on the water supply conditions. Water shortage levels shall also apply to catastrophic interruption of water

supplies, including, but not limited to, a regional power outage, an earthquake, a fire, and other potential emergency events.

(B) Water shortage mitigation, response, customer communications, enforcement, and relief actions that align with the water shortage levels required by subparagraph (A).

(b) A small water supplier serving 1,000 to 2,999 service connections, inclusive, and a nontransient noncommunity water system that is a school shall each make the abridged Water Shortage Contingency Plan available on their individual internet websites, if any. A small water supplier serving 1,000 to 2,999 service connections, inclusive, or a nontransient noncommunity water system that is a school that does not have an internet website shall make the abridged Water Shortage Contingency Plan available to persons upon request. The abridged Water Shortage Contingency Plan shall be provided to the state board's Division of Drinking Water for inspection upon demand.

(c) A small water supplier serving fewer than 1,000 service connections shall add drought planning elements, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) and subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a), to its emergency notification or response plan and submit the plan to the state board. The plan shall be updated every five years, or when significant changes occur.

(d) No later than December 31, 2022, the department and the state board shall create an abridged Water Shortage Contingency Plan template for small water suppliers serving 1,000 to 2,999 service connections, inclusive, and nontransient noncommunity water systems that are schools to facilitate implementation of this section.

(e) To the extent that funding is made available, the state board shall offer technical assistance to small water suppliers serving fewer than 1,000 service connections and nontransient noncommunity water systems that are schools to improve drought and water shortage resiliency, including requirements related to the emergency notification or response plan.

10609.61.

A small water supplier and a nontransient noncommunity water system that is a school shall each report annually water supply condition information to the state board through the state board's Electronic Annual Reporting (eAR) System or other reporting tool, as directed by the state board. Water supply condition information includes, but is not limited to, both of the following:

(a) An inventory and assessment of each water supply source, including its available status and if any further investments or treatment are required for its utilization, any lead time required for its utilization, and its delivery parameters such as flow rate and total volume available.

(b) The reporting year's total water demand volume for each month, and average and peak flowrate demand for each month and annually.

10609.62.

Small water suppliers and nontransient noncommunity water systems that are schools shall implement, subject to funding availability, all of the following drought resiliency measures:

- (a) No later than January 1, 2023, implement monitoring systems sufficient to detect production well groundwater levels.
- (b) Beginning no later than January 1, 2023, maintain membership in the California Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CalWARN) or similar mutual aid organization.
- (c) No later than January 1, 2024, to ensure continuous operations during power failures, provide adequate backup electrical supply.
- (d) No later than January 1, 2027, have at least one backup source of water supply, or a water system intertie, that meets current water quality requirements and is sufficient to meet average daily demand.
- (e) No later than January 1, 2032, meter each service connection and monitor for water loss due to leakages.
- (f) No later than January 1, 2032, have source system capacity, treatment system capacity if necessary, and distribution system capacity to meet fire flow requirements.

10609.63.

This chapter does not apply to small water suppliers, or small water suppliers integrated into larger water systems, that voluntarily choose to instead comply with Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 10620) of Part 2.6.

CHAPTER 3. State Small Water Systems Serving 5 to 14 Service Connections, Inclusive, and Domestic Wells

10609.70.

(a) (1) A county shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction, and shall invite representatives from the state and other local governments, including groundwater sustainability agencies, and community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents, to participate in the task force.

(2) In lieu of the task force required by paragraph (1), a county may establish an alternative process that facilitates drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. The alternative process shall provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.

(3) A county that establishes a drought task force on or before January 1, 2022, shall be deemed in compliance with this subdivision as long as the task force continues to exist.

(b) A county shall develop a plan that includes potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed interim and long-term solutions for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. The plan may be a stand-alone document or may be included as an element in an existing county plan, such as a local hazard mitigation plan, emergency operations plan, climate action plan, or general plan. A county shall consult with its drought task

force or alternative coordinating process as established by this section in developing its plan. A county shall consider, at a minimum, all of the following in its plan:

- (1) Consolidations for existing water systems and domestic wells.
 - (2) Domestic well drinking water mitigation programs.
 - (3) Provision of emergency and interim drinking water solutions.
 - (4) An analysis of the steps necessary to implement the plan.
 - (5) An analysis of local, state, and federal funding sources available to implement the plan.
- (c) The state board shall work with counties, groundwater sustainability agencies, technical assistance providers, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and the public to address state small water system and domestic well community drought and emergency water shortage resiliency needs, including both of the following:
- (1) Proactive communication to domestic well communities before a drought occurs, such as information on local bottled water and water tank providers.
 - (2) Funding for installation of basic drought and emergency water shortage resiliency infrastructure, such as well monitoring devices.

CHAPTER 4. State Agency Implementation

10609.80.

(a) The department shall take both of the following actions to support implementation of the recommendations of its County Drought Advisory Group:

- (1) Maintain, in partnership with the state board and other relevant state agencies, the risk vulnerability tool developed as part of the County Drought Advisory Group process and continue to refine existing data and gather new data for the tool, including, but not limited to, data on all of the following:
 - (A) Small water suppliers and nontransient noncommunity water systems serving a school.
 - (B) State small water systems and rural communities.
 - (C) Domestic wells and other self-supplied residents.
- (2) Update the risk vulnerability tool for small water suppliers and rural communities periodically, by doing all of the following:
 - (A) Revise the indicators and construction of the scoring as more data becomes readily available.
 - (B) Make existing and new data publicly available on the California Open Data internet web portal.
 - (C) In consultation with other relevant state agencies, identify deficits in data quality and availability and develop recommendations to address these gaps.

(b) (1) The department, in collaboration with the state board and relevant state agencies, shall establish a standing interagency drought and water shortage task force to facilitate proactive state planning and coordination, both for predrought planning and postdrought emergency response, to develop strategies to enhance collaboration between various fields, and to consider all types of water users.

(2) The interagency drought and water shortage task force shall include representatives from local governments, community-based organizations, nonprofit technical assistance providers, the public, and experts in land use planning, water resiliency, and water infrastructure.

SEC. 2.

If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.