

Sierra County Board of Supervisors

Drought Resilience Plan Presentation

March 17, 2026

This presentation summarizes the Sierra County Drought Resilience Plan (DRP). Additional detail is available in the DRP, available on the DRP Website:

<https://sierracounty.ca.gov/830/Drought-Task-Force>

Topics

1. Purpose and Scope
2. Drought and Water Shortage Task Force
3. Drought Resilience Plan Findings
4. Implementation
5. Conclusions and Next Steps



Photo Credit: Mary Davey



Photo Credit: Sierra County

Drought Resilience Plan Purpose, and Scope

Preceding Legislation

Assembly Bill 1668 and **Senate Bill (SB) 606** (passed in June 2018) outlined directives related to urban and agricultural water use efficiency and countywide drought resiliency.

- **10609.40(a)** *Small water suppliers and rural communities are often not covered by established water shortage planning requirements [...]*
- **1060940(b)** *The state should provide guidance to improve drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities.*
- **10609.42(a)** *No later than January 1, 2020, the department [...] shall use available data to identify small water suppliers and rural communities that may be at risk of drought and water shortage vulnerability [...], propose to the Governor and the Legislature 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.*





Drought Resilience Plan Purpose

Meet requirements of Senate Bill 552 by:

1. 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.
2. Develop a **County Drought Resilience Plan** that includes potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed interim and long-term solutions.

Primer of Senate Bill 552:
Drought Planning for Small Water
Suppliers and Rural Communities

Prepared by



And



May 2022

[Primer-of-SB-552-052522_final.pdf \(ca.gov\)](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/drought_planning/Primer-of-SB-552-052522_final.pdf)

Drought Resilience Plan Scope

Systems Covered by the DRP Include:

- **State small water systems (SSWSs)*:** A system for the provision of piped water to the public for human consumption that serves at least 5, but not more than 14, service connections
- **Domestic wells*:** A groundwater well used to supply water for the domestic needs of an individual residence or a water system that has no more than 4 service connections
- **Spring-fed Systems:** Small, spring-fed water systems within Sierra County that are not covered by other planning efforts.

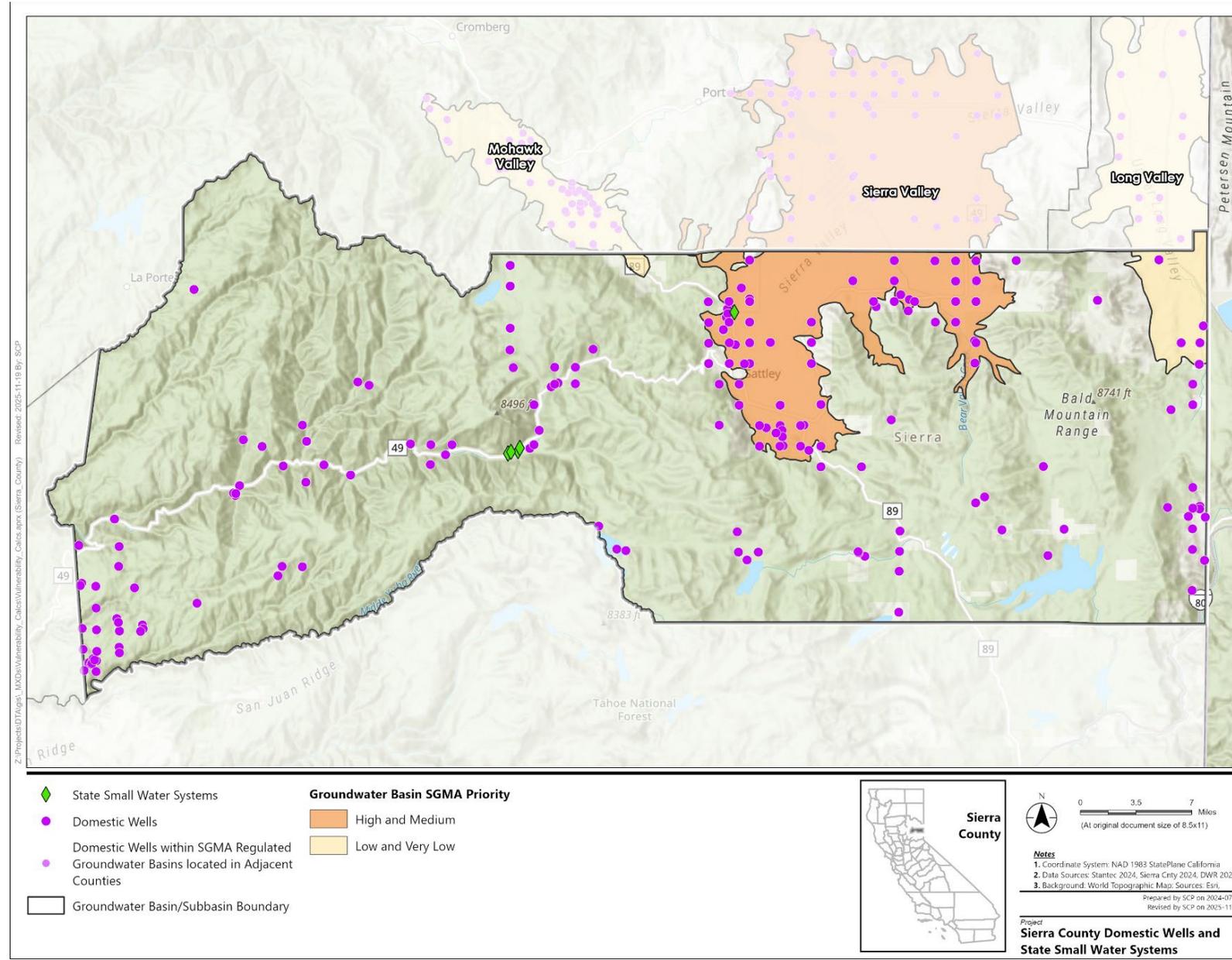
The DRP covers water shortages due to:

1. Drought: A period of abnormally dry weather that results in water shortages
2. Non-Drought Hazards such as wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and extended power shutoffs, and water quality issues, amongst others

**See California Water Code §10609.51 for full definitions*

Domestic Well and State Small Water System (SSWS) Locations

- Within Sierra County, there are:
- ~480 domestic wells
 - 5 State Small Water Systems



Note: domestic well locations shown are approximate



Photo Credit: Sierra County

Drought and Water Shortage Task Force

Drought and Water Shortage Task Force

SB 552 mandates a standing Drought and Water Shortage Task Force (Task Force). Composition of the Task Force is guided by CWC Section 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.

Sierra County Task Force

- Meets at least annually to review domestic well and SSWS water supply conditions
- Authorized body that makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

Task Force Members

Office of Emergency Services

Department of Environmental Health

Department of Planning and Building

Department of Public Works and Roads

City of Loyalton

County Board of Supervisors Representative

Community Service District

Domestic Well Owners

Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District

State Water Resources Control Board

State Small Water System Representative

Project
Coordination
Team*

**The Project Coordination Team developed the DRP and are the primary entities responsible for implementation*

Coordination and Communication

- **DRP [Website](#)** to distribute information to domestic well and SSWS communities such as:
 - DRP document, resources, county contact info
- **Notifications** via DRP website and County social media, amongst others



Photo Credit: Sierra County

Drought Resilience Plan Findings

Drought Resilience Plan Legislative Directive

SB 552, CWC Section 10609.70:

(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.

Major Drought Resilience Plan Contents

1. Risk Assessment

- Where in the County are domestic wells, SSWS, spring-fed small systems most vulnerable to water supply shortages and what drives that vulnerability?

2. Short-Term Response Actions

- What could the County do to provide emergency and interim drinking water supplies during a water shortage emergency?

3. Long-Term Mitigation Strategies and Actions

- What could the County do to reduce vulnerability to water supply shortages?

4. Drought Resilience Plan Implementation

- What activities will the County do to carry out the DRP findings?

Risk Assessment Findings

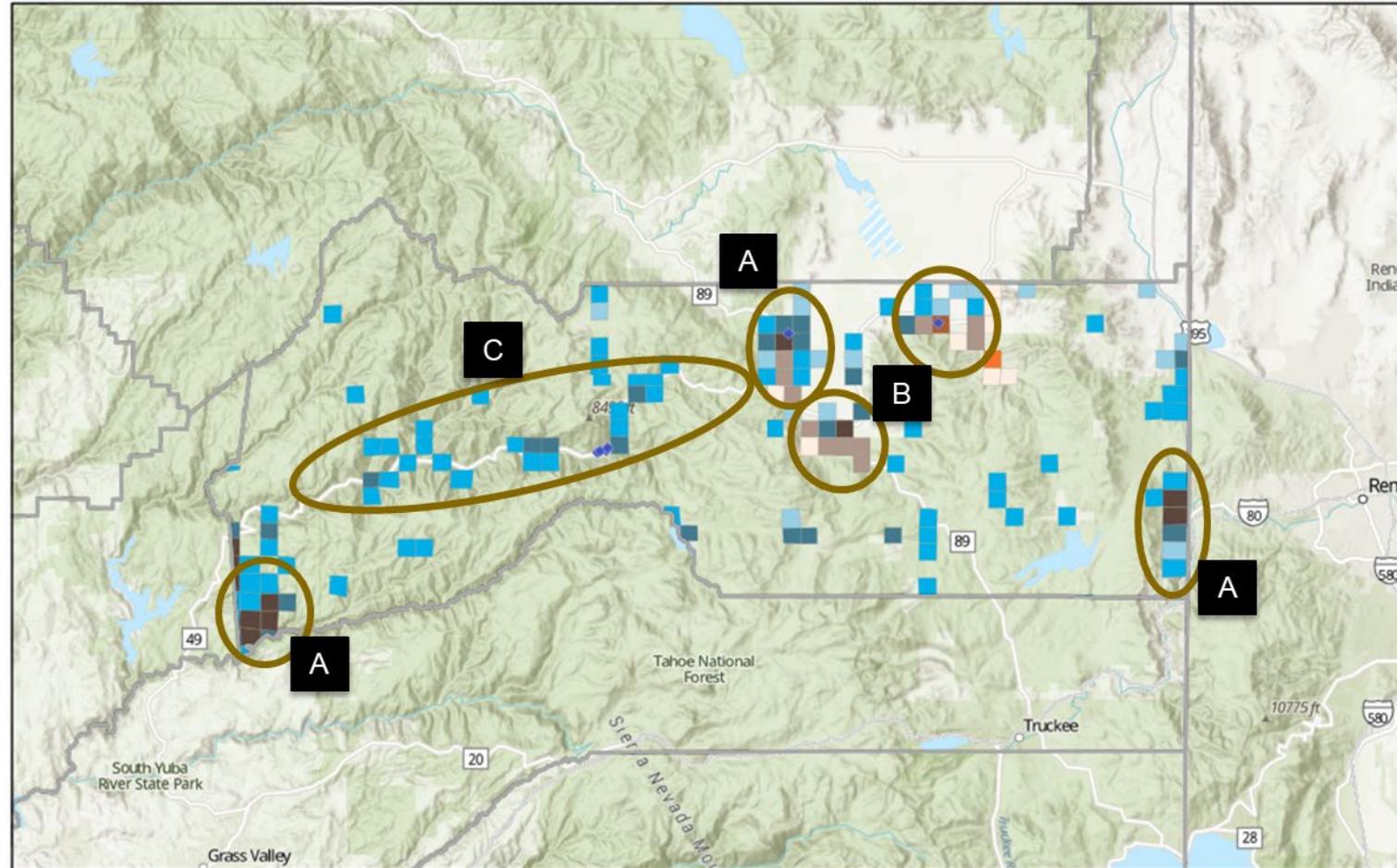
Focusing on domestic well, SSWS, and spring-fed small system communities:

- There have historically not been widespread water shortages
- Locations with elevated water shortage vulnerability include:
 - Calpine, Pike, and Verdi
 - Communities along the North Yuba River
 - Rural areas in the Sierra Valley Groundwater Basin near Sierraville and Loyalton
 - Isolated domestic well users across the County
- Vulnerability drivers include domestic well density, wildfire risk, and water quality risk

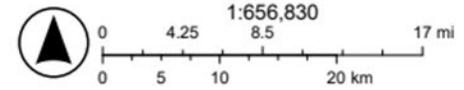
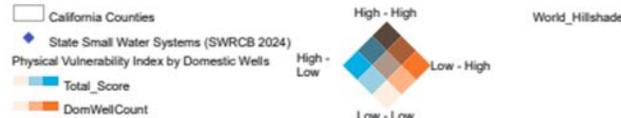
Risk Assessment Findings

Areas with heightened water shortage vulnerability for domestic wells and SSWs

- A:** Communities in fractured rock areas (Pike, Calpine, and Verdi)
- B:** Areas within the Sierra Valley Basin near Loyalton and Sierraville
- C:** Domestic wells, SSWs, and small spring-fed systems along the North Yuba River
- D:** Isolated domestic wells in fractured rock areas across the County



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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Conservation, California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Forestry

California Department of Water Resources
California Department of Water Resources

Short-Term Response Actions (STRA) Summary

Focusing on domestic well, SSWS, and spring-fed small system communities:

- Identified STRAs that provide emergency and interim drinking water supplies
 - Separated STRAs that could be activated now if needed from STRAs that will require additional resources
 - Listed what agreements and contracts could be developed outside of an emergency
- Defined an annual process to characterize their water supply health
- Developed an Emergency and Interim Drinking Water Distribution Plan for deploying water supplies during a water shortage emergency

Long-Term Mitigation Strategies and Actions (LTMSA) Summary

Focusing on domestic well, SSWS, and spring-fed small system communities:

- LTMSAs emphasize communication and outreach that educates and empowers individuals to improve their water supply reliability
 - Dedicated DRP website with information and contacts
 - Educational resources on groundwater monitoring, well rehabilitation, and addressing water quality issues
- Support community-initiated consolidation opportunities
- Serve as the voice of these communities in related planning efforts
- With additional resources, LTMSAs could provide direct support in improving water supply reliability and enhancing County monitoring programs



Photo Credit: Sierra County

Implementation



Annual Implementation Activities

Activity	Description	Timing
Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District Coordination	County Staff participate in meetings with SVGMD and review the Sierra Valley Groundwater Basin Annual Report. May include additional coordination based on water supply conditions.	February/March of each year
Internal Coordination	Annual meeting to inform development of water supply condition assessment. This meeting prepares and reviews the presentation for the annual Task Force meeting.	April of each year
Water Supply Condition Assessment	Engage with agencies/organizations that monitor physical risk factors and water supply conditions to evaluate water supplies associated with domestic well and SSWS communities. This will occur in advance of the annual Task Force meeting.	April of each year
Drought Resilience Plan Website Update	County Staff update the website content and resource materials at least annually. This includes any contact info, list of resources (vendors, links to external websites, etc.), water supply condition assessment, and other website content.	April of each year prior to Task Force meeting
Task Force Meeting	County Staff schedule and facilitate at least one Task Force meeting annually. The meeting will follow the annual water supply condition assessment update. Results of this assessment shall support County Staff, in collaboration with its Task Force, identify potential activation of water shortage response measures as described in this plan.	May of each year



Implementation Roadmap: Oversight, Responsibilities, Priorities and Needs

- Oversight: County OES will oversee implementation, including Task Force coordination and updating the County DRP
 - County DRP updated at least every 5 years, or after an emergency event
- Responsibility: Each STRA and LTMSA has a County entity responsible for implementation, with support from other entities
- STRAs and LTMSAs were assigned implementation priorities
- Most STRAs and LTMSAs have additional resource needs:
 - Additional Staff Time: Reallocation of existing County Staff time or new staff
 - County Budget: Additional budget, but could be funded through existing County budget
 - External Funds: Additional non-County funds (i.e. grants)



Conclusions and Next Steps

DRP Implementation Conclusions

- Improved understanding of water shortage vulnerabilities of domestic well, SSWS, and spring-fed small systems in Sierra County
- List of STRAs and LTMSAs that improve water supply reliability for these communities
 - New website with resources for these communities
 - Most STRAs and LTMSAs cannot be implemented without additional resources
- Task Force and DRP support implementation of STRAs and LTMSAs
- County Staff may look to Board of Supervisors for support in funding DRP implementation

Next Steps

DRP Completion Schedule:

- DRP Finalization: Through 3/31

Post-DRP Completion:

- Annual Task Force meeting organized by OES
- DRP updated at least every 5 years



Photo Credit: Sierra County

Additional Questions and Discussion

