

Monterey Park Tract: Surrounded by contamination

Contaminants of Concern: Nitrates, Arsenic

The Problem: Monterey Park Tract obtains water from two wells. One exceeds the drinking water standard for nitrates and arsenic, and the second contains high levels of nitrates and also exceeds the drinking water standard for arsenic.

About the Community: Monterey Park is a small unincorporated community of about 50 homes located a little more than six miles south of Ceres in Stanislaus County. It is a diverse community of historically African American residents mixed with an increasing Latino population.



A narrow road separates houses from the local dairy farm

The community is ringed by agriculture, with a working dairy within 100 feet of some homes, and cornfields (which require a high amount of nitrogen and are often fertilized with manure from dairies) encircling the rest of the community.

The community is served by the Monterey Park Tract Community Services District, which is run by a five-person board elected by residents of the community. The community has had a hard time filling vacant positions because of the low number of people in the community and the requirements for citizenship.

The Solution: The California Department of Public Health is providing \$160,000 in funding for a feasibility study, which is being matched by the County with \$40,000. The District has also received funding from the state to install meters on the homes.

Small communities typically cannot afford the ongoing costs of treating contaminated water, so the alternatives under study include drilling a new well or connecting to a community with clean water. Drilling a new well can be a good option for communities because the costs for operation and maintenance are low, but finding clean groundwater in this area may be difficult. Connection with the nearest large water system in Ceres, is the most sustainable solution for the community, but the long distance presents challenges. The results of the feasibility study will be available later this summer.

Next Steps: Finding a solution is just the beginning. It generally takes years of looking for multiple funding sources to fully finance a project before construction can even begin.