

Monterey Park Tract: Surrounded by Contamination

Contaminants of Concern: Nitrates, Arsenic

The Problem: Monterey Park Tract owns two wells. One exceeds the drinking water standard for nitrates and has been removed from service, and the second exceeds the drinking water standard for arsenic but is providing tap water to the community – with a warning that it is not fit to drink.

About the Community: Monterey Park is a small unincorporated community of 44 homes located about six miles south of Ceres in Stanislaus County. It is a diverse community of historically African American residents mixed with an increasing Latino population.



The community is ringed by agriculture, including a working dairy within 100 feet of some homes, and cornfields that require a high amount of nitrogen and are often fertilized with manure from dairies.

The community's drinking water is provided by the Monterey Park Tract Community Services District, which is run by a five-person board

elected by the community.

The Search for Solutions: The community received a \$200,000 grant from the California Department of Public Health and Stanislaus County to conduct a feasibility study on the best alternative to provide safe drinking water. The study, completed in September, found no potential well site that would not require expensive treatment. The remaining options for the community are to add treatment for arsenic to their current water supply, or hook up to the nearest city, Ceres, 4.9 miles away (this study identifies this as the most cost-effective solution.)

Both solutions are expensive, even with grant funding, and will require a substantial increase in water rates for a community whose median household income is less than half that of the state median. The interconnection with Ceres would require local approvals from the City of Ceres and the Stanislaus County LAFCo board.

Next Steps: The Monterey Park Tract Water Board has submitted a grant proposal for Proposition 84 funding to pay the cost of hooking up to the City of Ceres' water supply. To qualify for funding, the community must conduct an audit of the district that may cost up to \$20,000 (or roughly the annual budget of the water system).