

Action Item Report Out from Fall RTOC Drinking Water Program

- Kashia Tribe had to implement their Drought Contingency Plan due to low levels of potable water. Although Kashia resolved their issue, there is concern that there are some Tribes who do not have those resources. The request is for EPA to develop resources for Tribes which include information from EPA, States, Indian Health Service, etc. (Example provided was Kashia having to haul potable water for the Community).

Response: The California state water board can support emergency drinking water needs (e.g. bottled water, hauled water) for tribal communities. To apply for funding, Tribes can submit a single application [Urgent Drinking Water Needs Application](#) to DFA-CAA@waterboards.ca.gov. EPA tribal drinking water staff and TA providers can assist tribes with completing the application and liaising with the state board staff.

The Indian Health Service has limited funding available to support emergency water supply needs and water hauling projects. The best points of contact are IHS SFC area directors.

Drought contingency planning and other drinking water program capacity building activities can be supported with EPA GAP funds.

EPA can fund long-term solutions to water supply deficiencies through the drinking water tribal set aside program <https://www.epa.gov/tribal/region-9-drinking-water-tribal-set-aside-program>

This includes funding for both planning and construction activities (e.g. identification of a new groundwater well, etc.). Tribal drinking water team program managers are available to assist water systems with scoping funding and emergency resources to address drought.

- When new drinking water or wastewater systems are installed (or replaced), O&M needs and requirements become additional issues.
- Future repair costs need to be understood at the start of the projects

Response: EPA agrees that the operation and maintenance costs of new water infrastructure projects should be well developed and understood prior to funding and construction. For EPA funded projects, we require that project proponents develop a preliminary engineering report (PER) that includes a life cycle cost analysis for each alternative that is considered. The life cycle cost analysis covers a 20-year planning period and compares the initial capital costs and the annual recurring costs of operating the new infrastructure. Tribes are encouraged to review the analysis and provide feedback to the agency developing the PER to ensure that it accurately reflects O&M and future repair costs, and to ensure it agrees with the selected alternative. EPA will look more closely at O&M and future repair costs when evaluating project proposals for EPA funding.

- The differences in the IHS and EPA project scoring systems create unmet need issues that could have been mitigated before disaster strikes (fire/flood/etc.).

Response: EPA is open to revising its ranking system for Region 9's Drinking Water Tribal Set Aside (DWTSA) selection based on RTOC input. Region 9's current project solicitation and ranking system was developed to more effectively prioritize projects with the greatest health-based needs. The ranking system was developed in response to a direct request from the RTOC and subsequent consultation with tribes who had expressed concern about relying solely on IHS's SDS list for project selection, as many other EPA regions do.