



Media Release

Tulare County Focus of First State Water Board Mandatory Water Company Consolidation

Division of Drinking Water Orders Consolidation between City of Tulare, Pratt Mutual Water Company

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 1, 2016

Contact: Andrew DiLuccia
andrew.diluccia@waterboards.ca.gov

SACRAMENTO – As part of its commitment that all Californians have access to safe, reliable drinking water, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) issued its first-ever mandatory consolidation order this week between the city of Tulare and the Pratt Mutual Water Company in Tulare County.

Under the powers enacted by [Senate Bill \(SB\) 88](#), signed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. on June 24, 2015, the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water (Division) issued an order directing the city of Tulare to connect Matheny Tract, a predominantly Hispanic, disadvantaged community of approximately 1,500 residents, to its water system. The housing tract is currently served by Pratt Mutual through a two-well system that has high levels of arsenic, and has been in violation of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for arsenic since 2010. The consolidation must be complete by June 1, 2016.

"The state is committed to implementing mandatory consolidation where appropriate, and this action was the best avenue for supplying safe drinking water supplies to the residents of Matheny Tract," said Cindy Forbes, deputy director for the Division of Drinking Water. "All Californians should have access to clean and reliable drinking water, and this is an important tool the State Water Board has in moving toward that goal."

In 2010 the Division, then with the California Department of Public Health, issued a compliance order to Pratt Mutual for consistently violating the MCL for arsenic. After the order was issued, Pratt Mutual began talks with the city of Tulare regarding consolidation into the larger system.

In April 2011, Tulare and Pratt Mutual agreed to proceed with the consolidation. In August 2013, \$4.9 million in [Proposition 84](#) funding was made available to construct a new water distribution system for Matheny Tract, which included two points of connection to Tulare's water system.

On August 18, 2015, the Division issued a letter to the two public water systems recommending Pratt Mutual and Tulare reach an agreement within six months to voluntarily

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1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • www.waterboards.ca.gov



consolidate their two systems. A voluntary consolidation could not be reached as the original agreement between the two parties from 2011 ended in litigation. On March 3, 2016, the Division began the steps toward mandatory consolidation per the rules of SB 88 by hosting the first of two public meetings.

After a public hearing on March 17 and reviewing a set of criteria used to determine whether or not a mandatory consolidation is appropriate, the Division issued a mandatory consolidation order to the city of Tulare and Pratt Mutual Water Company.

Tulare must make it known in writing to the State Water Board by April 15 that it intends to comply with the mandatory consolidation order. By June 1 the consolidation must be complete and Tulare must begin to supply water to the residents of Matheny Tract through two existing interconnections.

The city must submit a full consolidation plan to the State Water Board by May 1. If the Division rejects the plan, or makes edits to it, the city has 15 days from receiving notice to file a final consolidation plan that includes the Division's changes.

If the city of Tulare does not abide by the conditions laid out in the consolidation order, it can be subject to citations and administrative penalties.

To learn more about the consolidation process and see the order, visit the State Water Board's [webpage](#) on mandatory consolidation.

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