



## Assessing Drought Impacts in Tulare County



The drought in California which began in 2012 was the most severe in the State's recorded history. In addition to the far-reaching impacts that drought has on the environment and the economy of affected communities, it may also have significant effects on public health. Particularly as climate change exacerbates the occurrence of drought, understanding the impact of these events on California residents is a critical part of establishing resilience in the state. In 2015, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) partnered with Mariposa County Health Department and Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency to quantify the public health impacts of drought. Tulare County reported the greatest number of dry private wells in the state, and Mariposa County experienced unparalleled tree mortality. Using Community Assessments for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER), a rapid community needs assessment method developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDPH evaluated household water use as well as drought-associated exacerbations of chronic diseases and behavioral health issues, acute stressors, and financial impacts.

These assessments produced the first estimates of drought impacts on household health, peace of mind, acute stress, worsening of chronic disease, finances, and property, demonstrating that households might perceive physical and mental health effects and financial and property impacts due to drought. The findings were used to augment ongoing drought response operations in Tulare and Mariposa Counties, including targeted outreach to residents for water assistance, expanding behavioral health services, identifying populations with special needs, and the development of drought adaptation plans through a cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control (CDC). These findings were published in the [Community Assessment Report for Tulare County](#), [Community Assessment Report for Mariposa County](#) and in the American Journal of Public Health's article, [Physical, Mental, and Financial Impacts from Drought in Two California Counties, 2015](#).



Image provided by the State Water Resources Control Board

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