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## Stanislaus residents, activists make push for clean water

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The water is not safe. Parents buy bottled water to drink, cook and bathe their infants.

Some children have suffered painful intestinal aches.

These people aren't from a Third World country — they live in Stanislaus County's outlying areas such as Monterey Tract Park and Riverdale Park, where access to clean, healthy drinking water is hard to come by.

Residents and clean water organizers talked about their plight Tuesday in rallies and news conferences across California, in conjunction with National Drinking Water Week.

"I'm worried about my children and their future," said Mario Jimenez, a resident of Riverdale, at a news conference in Modesto.

Riverdale is a community of 300 houses west of Ceres, west of Carpenter Road between Paradise Road and Whitmore Avenue. "Water is life. If there's no water, there's no life," Jimenez said.

Cities and towns across California consistently test positive for contaminants such as arsenic, manganese and nitrates. Ingesting them can cause cancer, neurological disorders and stomach pain.

To avoid the danger, some people buy bottled water, but the cost is too high for many low-income families, residents said Tuesday.

Some of the chemicals occur naturally, but others come from landfills or dairy and farm runoff.

"Instead of fighting over surface water, like how much should be pumped from the delta or which way canals flow, people should be thinking about groundwater and what you're drinking," said Jennifer Clary, water policy analyst with Clean Water Action. The San Francisco-based coalition fights for clean water across California.

Monterey Park Tract and Riverdale are surrounded by farms and dairies. Each community can build new wells or treat water to clean it, but the cost can be hard for them to fund alone.

"The smaller the community, the more difficult it is to bear the cost," Clary said.

Monterey Park Tract received a grant and money from Stanislaus County to study water cleanup and new delivery methods, but the solution could cost millions of dollars, Clary said.

In the meantime, residents like Jimenez hope to spread the word about their lack of quality water and convince local officials to help, said Virginia Madueño, Riverbank mayor and community organizer with Clean Water Action.

"Clean water is a fundamental, basic human right," she said.

For more information about bringing clean water to communities such as Monterey Park Tract and Riverdale Park, go to [www.cleanwateraction.org](http://www.cleanwateraction.org).

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