

## Safe water for Seville, other rural Tulare County areas to be focus of rally; residents can bring samples for testing

BY ANA OROZCO BURLESON • FOR THE VISALIA TIMES-DELTA • MAY 3, 2010

The last thing you expect to see in your water glass is a sandy sludge at the bottom.

But for more than five decades, that's what the residents of Seville have experienced. The problem is so bad, Seville recently was featured in a Nickelodeon TV special on the absence of clean and safe drinking water in third-world countries like Bangladesh and Honduras.

"Safe drinking water is a human right," said Susana De Anda, co-executive [director](#) of the Community Water Center in Visalia.

In an effort to focus state and federal attention on the problem, which also affects other rural Tulare County communities, Seville and the Community Water Center will host a National Drinking Water Week rally Tuesday at which residents may bring tap water for testing. There also will be a tour of the community.

"You'll actually be seeing the problems, like the pipes being above ground," De Anda said. "We're going to get a good sense of what it's like living in a community with many water challenges."

Contaminants found in Seville's drinking water are potentially fatal. They include arsenic and nitrates, which cause cancer and blue baby syndrome, De Anda said.

Blue baby syndrome occurs in babies 6 months or younger who ingest water with high nitrate levels.

"When their blood is unable to absorb oxygen, they suffocate and turn blue," De Anda said.

Residents of Seville and other outlying Tulare County communities have been double-paying for drinking water for years, De Anda said. They pay monthly for water they can't drink, then must drive miles away to purchase bottled water.

"They've just conformed to the situation," she said. "But you can't conform to an injustice."

The Community Water Center is calling on Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) and the Central Valley's congressional representatives to provide direct emergency funding to communities without safe drinking water as well as long-term solutions.

"We need to prioritize that drinking water is the essence of life and [that] without it, we cannot live," De Anda said.



(FILE PHOTO)

### HOW TO ATTEND

- What: Tour, press conference and free water testing
- When: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday
- Where: Road 156 in Seville, next to the water system. Directions will be posted.
- Information: Community Water Center, 733-0219