Thirteen years of arsenic, a treatment plant that never ran — Lanare, Fresno County

Lanare is a Fresno County farm town of roughly 300 people that lived with arsenic-contaminated water for more than thirteen years — including nine years paying off a state-funded treatment plant that sat unused almost from the day it was built.

13

Years Lanare's water carried arsenic above the federal limit before a lasting fix was in place.

$3.8M

Cost of the 2019 well project that finally resolved Lanare's contamination, after an earlier, state-funded treatment plant had already failed.

What happened

Lanare's water carried arsenic above the federal maximum contaminant level for more than thirteen years. In 2007, the community got a state-funded arsenic treatment plant — but it broke down almost immediately and sat unused for years afterward, while residents kept paying off the debt the district had taken on to build it. A lasting fix didn't arrive until 2019, when a $3.8 million well project replaced the failed approach entirely. Lanare is formally a census-designated place; American Community Survey data put its population at 297 people and 72 housing units, though a 2018 community survey counted more dwelling units (154) than the ACS figure — a discrepancy we're noting rather than resolving.

Impact — what we know, and what we don't

- **The 2007–2019 gap:** Well documented as a period of ongoing arsenic exposure and ongoing debt payments on a plant that didn't work — one of the clearest examples in this record of a "fix" that made a problem worse before it got better.
- **Who bore the debt-repayment cost, and how:** Not captured in the sources reviewed for this pass.

- **Current status since 2019:** Not independently reconfirmed past the well project's completion; we don't have more recent water-quality testing data for Lanare.

Part of a larger pattern

Lanare's failed-plant-then-well-fix arc mirrors **Allensworth's** long gap between first detecting arsenic and actually completing new wells and storage — both towns show that identifying a water problem and actually fixing it can be a decade or more apart, even with funding nominally in place. It's one of three Fresno County communities in this pass, alongside **Cantua Creek** and the **Shady Lakes Mobile Home Park settlement**, each representing a different mechanism — failed infrastructure, unresolved contamination, and litigation, respectively.

Sources

- KVPR, Mother Jones, and KQED reporting on Lanare's arsenic contamination and treatment-plant failure (compiled via prior research pass; original AB 686 research bank).
  Access: not-captured — a public URL exists for this source and this project has not recorded it.

Full citation detail and source archive: **Data**. Back to **water insecurity in the Central Valley**.