Four wells, four arsenic violations, one consolidation — Keyes, Stanislaus County

Keyes ran four groundwater wells before consolidation — and every single one of them exceeded the arsenic maximum contaminant level. A multi-phase, state-funded project eventually resolved six separate drinking-water compliance orders at once. Then a new problem, 1,2,3-TCP, showed up.

5939

Keyes' population, served by a water system that once ran entirely on arsenic-violating wells.

2019

Year a multi-phase consolidation project — connecting five small water systems into Keyes' new treatment plant — resolved six separate drinking-water compliance orders.

What happened

Before consolidation, the Keyes Community Services District ran four groundwater wells, and every one of them exceeded the arsenic maximum contaminant level. Several small, disadvantaged communities nearby were served by similarly non-compliant wells, falling under Stanislaus County's jurisdiction rather than the state's. A Drinking Water State Revolving Fund planning study concluded that a centralized coagulation/filtration arsenic-treatment plant was the best fix; DWSRF funding paid for both the plant and for physically connecting five small water systems to Keyes CSD through about 2.5 miles of new 10- to 14-inch PVC waterline, with stub-outs installed for future connections. The multi-phase project addressed six separate drinking-water compliance orders and was completed in 2019. In April 2021, a nearby non-community water system, Interstate Truck Center, consolidated in through one of those stub-outs — a privately funded move that resolved about 42 of its own violations and let the old system be shut down entirely. Since then, Keyes has had to start over on a new contaminant: the system now faces a 1,2,3-TCP problem and is pursuing a separate DWSRF-funded Granular Activated Carbon treatment project to address it.

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

- **Arsenic status since 2019:** Resolved, per the state's own partnership-success documentation — this is one of the more fully confirmed fixes in this project's record.
- **Current TCP treatment status:** Unconfirmed — described as "working on" a GAC project in the source reviewed, without a completion date.
- **Farm-labor and demographic context beyond the population figure:** Not captured in this pass.

Part of a larger pattern

Keyes is this project's clearest consolidation success story — four wells, four violations, one coordinated fix that absorbed several of its disadvantaged neighbors into a working system. It's also a reminder that fixing one contaminant doesn't end a town's water story: the same system now facing TCP is the same chemical thread running through **Earlimart's** Tulare County lawsuit and the broader Shell/Dow litigation across the valley.

Sources

- California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water, "Keyes Story" (Partnership Success case study, PDF).

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