Founded by Black settlers in 1908, still fighting arsenic in 2025 — Allensworth, Tulare County

Allensworth was founded in 1908 as California's first town built, financed, and governed entirely by Black settlers. More than a century later, it's still waiting on a reliable, arsenic-free water supply — a fight that spans generations and, as of this project's research, isn't finished yet.

2013

Year arsenic was identified in Allensworth's water — new wells and storage tanks weren't expected to be complete until 2025.

$3.8M

2025–26 SAFER grant awarded toward Allensworth's water fix.

What happened

Allensworth, about 70 miles south of Fresno in Tulare County, was founded in 1908 by Lieutenant Colonel Allen Allensworth and fellow Black settlers as the first California town established, financed, and governed by Black Americans. Arsenic was identified in its water supply in 2013; new wells and storage tanks needed to fix the problem weren't expected to be complete until 2025 — a twelve-year gap between diagnosis and resolution. In the interim, about 50 homes received hydropanel systems, each providing roughly 2 gallons of water per customer per day, as a stopgap. The town's 2025–26 water fix carries a $3.8 million SAFER (Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience) state grant.

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

- **Whether the 2025 wells and storage tanks were actually completed on schedule:** Not confirmed past the funding award — this project doesn't have independent verification that construction finished.
- **Population:** Not captured in this pass.

- **Hydropanel adequacy:** 2 gallons per customer per day is a bare stopgap allocation; the sources reviewed don't say whether residents supplemented it with other sources or how it compared to actual household need.

Part of a larger pattern

Allensworth's twelve-year gap between identifying arsenic and completing a fix is the longest documented in this project's Tulare County record, matched only by **Lanare's** thirteen-year arsenic problem in neighboring Fresno County. Both towns show the same structural problem: identifying contamination is the easy part; funding and building the fix is what actually takes a decade.

Sources

- FERN (Food & Environment Reporting Network), KQED, and KVPR reporting on Allensworth's founding and water crisis (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.
- California State Water Resources Control Board, SAFER program grant records, 2025–26. 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**.