A thousand dry wells in four years — East Porterville, Tulare County

East Porterville became the public face of California's drought-era water crisis for a reason: roughly 1,000 household wells ran dry there between 2012 and 2016, in a community that's about three-quarters Latino, before a $48 million fix finally reached it.

1000

Household wells that ran dry in East Porterville during the 2012–2016 drought.

$48M

Cost of the water-system fix that eventually reached East Porterville.

What happened

East Porterville, an unincorporated Tulare County community roughly 75% Latino, became national news during California's 2012–2016 drought when approximately 1,000 household wells ran dry — leaving residents hauling water, relying on bottled and tanked deliveries, and in some cases living without running water in their homes for years. The eventual fix — connecting residences to a more reliable water system — cost roughly $48 million. The scale and duration of the crisis, documented by Mother Jones, KVPR, sjvwater.org, and Wikipedia's own account of the episode, made East Porterville the reference case against which other Central Valley communities' water crises are often measured, including by this project.

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

- **Timeline from well failure to connection:** Not fully reconstructed in this pass — we have the overall drought window (2012–2016) and the eventual fix cost, not a household-by-household timeline.
- **Population:** Not captured as a standalone figure in this pass, beyond the ~75% Latino demographic composition.
- **Post-fix water security:** Not independently reconfirmed since the $48 million project's completion.

Part of a larger pattern

East Porterville is the community every other case in this record gets measured against — it's the reason this project's Gate 2 finding (the overlap between water-insecure communities and farm-labor communities) started with named places instead of an abstract claim. **Tooleville** and **Allensworth**, both also in Tulare County, show the same underlying dynamic at smaller scale and with less national attention.

Sources

- Mother Jones, KVPR, sjvwater.org, and Wikipedia reporting on the East Porterville drought 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.

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