



Resolution 16-5
Approved September 28, 2016
Wheeling, West Virginia

Revised April 20, 2017
Via Conference Call

Revised April 10, 2019
Arlington, Virginia

Revised April 6, 2022
Asheville, North Carolina

Revised March 26, 2025
Arlington, Virginia

As certified by
Ben Grumbles
Executive Director

ADDRESSING SERIOUS NEEDS REGARDING DRINKING WATER AND CLEAN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

WHEREAS, drinking water and clean water infrastructure is critical to the provision of clean and safe drinking water, and to the management of water that is protective of public health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, states, territories, and the District of Columbia (hereinafter referred to as “states”) play an integral role in building drinking water and clean water infrastructure, including seeking community input to determine priorities, planning, providing technical assistance, marketing investment in green infrastructure, design, performing cost-effective engineering analyses, permitting, monitoring compliance, administering loans, and preventing fraud and waste; and

WHEREAS, America’s drinking water and clean water infrastructure is aging and an increasing number of local governments are unable to financially keep pace with growing demands, including those associated with a changing climate, scientific and technological advancements, public health threats caused by drinking water contaminants, cybersecurity threats, and existing and new requirements; and

WHEREAS, disadvantaged communities, small communities, isolated communities, communities with limited resources, and rural communities are particularly pressed to make these needed investments and to operate and maintain these assets; and

WHEREAS, U.S. EPA’s 7th Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey, reporting nationwide needs as of January 1, 2021, estimated that our drinking water infrastructure would require an investment of \$625 billion from 2021-2040, and U.S. EPA’s last Clean Watershed Needs Survey, reporting nationwide needs as of January 1, 2022, estimated that an investment of \$630.1 billion would be required over the next twenty years to address clean water infrastructure needs; and

WHEREAS, extensive documentation shows that drinking water and clean water infrastructure funding needs exceed the federal government’s investment levels; and

WHEREAS, increased investments in drinking water and clean water infrastructure through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and additional funds through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), improved progress toward meeting the goals of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) through increased resources for the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF) programs and the advancement of new water infrastructure programs; and

WHEREAS, these increased investments under IIJA and ARP are complementary to the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 which established a financing mechanism for drinking water and clean water infrastructure projects to be managed by U.S. EPA under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program; and

WHEREAS, IIJA included the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 which included authorization for the DWSRF and CWSRF through FY2026; and

WHEREAS, beginning in FY22, Congress has provided funding for Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending (CPF/CDS) from funds appropriated to the DWSRF and CWSRF and some of these projects may not be included in a state's Intended Use Plan and may not have been considered for public review and comment; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies must collaborate closely with states and territories to effectively and efficiently spend IIJA and ARP resources, advance innovative funding and technical support, provide technical assistance to communities, and increase state and territorial program capacity for our nation's aging drinking water and clean water treatment systems; and

WHEREAS, since 2018, Congress has established and funded seven new State and Tribal Assistance Grant (STAG) infrastructure assistance grants related to drinking water and clean water safety including assistance for small and disadvantaged communities, reducing lead in drinking water, lead testing in schools, drinking water infrastructure resilience and sustainability, technical assistance for treatment works, sewer overflow control grants, and water infrastructure and workforce investment; and

WHEREAS, other federal agencies also provide critical funding for small communities' water infrastructure, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Water and Wastewater Loan and Grant Program; and

WHEREAS, emerging and existing contaminants such as algal toxins, nutrients, pharmaceuticals and personal care products, microplastics, nanomaterials, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances threaten the safe uses of all surface and groundwater, are found in drinking water, wastewater, stormwater and non-point source pollution, and can threaten human health, aquatic life, and the environment; and

WHEREAS, increased usage of electronic and internet-connected systems is vital for drinking water and clean water critical infrastructure to reduce water pollution and contamination that pose significant risks to public health and the environment, and to operate facilities in a cost-effective manner to continually promote reliability and resilience of water and treatment systems; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of energy efficiency and conservation measures, as well as the production of clean energy on-site from renewable sources, including solar, wind, geothermal, and biogas combined heat and power systems, may reduce water utilities' energy budgets and improve emergency operational capabilities, system resiliency, capacity, and affordability without compromising water quality when properly implemented; and

WHEREAS, recruiting and retaining experienced certified operators is essential to safeguarding drinking water and clean water infrastructure investments by ensuring proper operation, maintenance, and management of all unit processes and equipment; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for programs to increase the number of certified drinking water and clean water system operators to ensure the safe and effective operation of our water infrastructure, particularly in disadvantaged communities, small communities, isolated communities, communities with limited resources, and rural communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL OF THE STATES (ECOS):

Supports the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs), and encourages work with state agencies through ECOS to efficiently and effectively utilize the IIJA and ARP resources to meet the needs identified in the respective needs surveys;

Urges the Congressional Committees to invest in sustainable funding for the SRFs, and recommends that if the CPF/CDS process continues, Congress not divert funding from the SRFs for this purpose;

Encourages CPF/CDS funds to be obligated in a timely manner in order to be used efficiently;

Encourages if CPF/CDS projects are managed by states, that projects that have completed a State Environmental Review Process (SERP) and where a SERP is appropriately aligned with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), that U.S. EPA accept SERP in lieu of NEPA to streamline processes while maintaining protection of public health and the environment;

Recognizes that significant increases in SRF appropriations impact states' ability to meet the SRF match requirements and encourages relief and flexibility for match and cost-share requirements to allow states to deliver federal funds efficiently and effectively to communities across the nation;

Encourages identification of financing approaches to help communities make sustainable decisions for drinking water and clean water infrastructure investment to protect public health and water resources and prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters;

Encourages Congress to provide additional and timely funding for state drinking water and clean water cybersecurity needs, and if additional funding for cybersecurity comes through the SRFs, that it supplements rather than comes at the expense of other eligible uses for SRF funding;

Supports prioritizing use of additional subsidy resources to provide efficient, affordable, and timely awards to disadvantaged communities, small communities, isolated communities, communities with limited resources, and rural communities;

Supports efforts to train new and retain experienced, certified drinking water and clean water system operators by expanding access to continuing education and certification renewal training programs that advance this trade as a good career option with our nation's youth and job-seekers transitioning from other fields and urges Congress to provide grant funding for recruitment and retention initiatives;

Supports U.S. EPA's continued efforts to work with states, territories, and localities to reduce the federally-imposed administrative burdens of utilizing SRF funds;

Supports ongoing federal financial support for states' funding of green infrastructure solutions, including water conservation projects, ecological restoration and protection projects, aquifer recharge or storage and recovery, pollution prevention projects, climate or severe weather resilience projects, energy efficiency measures, and on-site renewable power generation projects, through the SRF programs and other appropriate financing mechanisms, with the understanding that the allocation of SRF funds to eligible purposes, including green infrastructure, should remain exclusively with each individual state to ensure that these programs are responsive to the individual needs of each state;

Urges U.S. EPA to support flexible utilization of Pollution Control (Section 106 CWA) and Public Water System Supervision (PWSS) STAG Categorical Grants for state administrative costs;

Encourages Congress to provide increased Section 106 CWA and PWSS STAG Categorical Grants funding for state implementation purposes and to consider making STAG infrastructure grants eligible for Performance Partnership Grants (PPGs) to minimize grant administrative burdens;

Recommends that funding for WIFIA not come at the expense of funding to the SRFs or the STAG grants, and that any increases in funding to one SRF not adversely affect the other SRF;

Supports continued funding for drinking water and clean water infrastructure funding mechanisms and programs across the federal government, including the USDA Water and Wastewater Loan and Grant Program, which cannot be adequately replaced with SRF money; and

Urges continued, constructive national conversations around these subjects, including documenting successes, best practices, risk management case studies in innovative funding, and effective and sustainable partnerships.