

## Why Maine Needs a National Clean Water Trust Fund



The United States's wastewater infrastructure, aging and increasingly unable to handle the pressures of modern society, is in serious danger. When pipes break and sewers overflow, communities, the environment, and our economy all suffer.

Recognizing that states across the country were faced with clean water spending requirements well beyond their ability to support, the federal government created the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. The fund, established in the late 1980s, provides states with federal grant money that they then use to make low-interest loans to communities for clean water projects.

Unfortunately, funding for the program has atrophied since it became fully operational in 1991. Since that year, funding has been cut by half (nearly two-thirds when adjusted for inflation), leaving states scrambling to deal with growing backlogs of maintenance and improvement projects. Broken pipes and sewer overflows spill more than one trillion gallons of untreated sewage every year and contaminate our beaches, waterways, and estuaries.

Given the fickle year-to-year funding of the SRF and the urgency of our clean water troubles, we need a new solution. A federal clean water trust fund would provide a steady, reliable, and equitable source of funding for needed projects across the country. By sidestepping the contentious appropriations process, a trust fund would safeguard our clean water infrastructure, our environment, and our economy.

**Funding Gap:** Maine's water needs outpace its current ability to fund projects by a large margin. While the state's most recent Intended Use Plan shows only \$59 million in current needs, its long-term Priority List gives no expected funding levels for the many projects it contains. The American Society of Civil Engineers, meanwhile, projects the state will require over \$1.1 billion in wastewater spending. In 2007, the state received \$8.3 million from the federal government.

Federal contributions to Maine's clean water funding efforts have decreased by 48 percent since the Clean Water SRF was fully implemented in fiscal 1991 and 66 percent when adjusted for inflation.

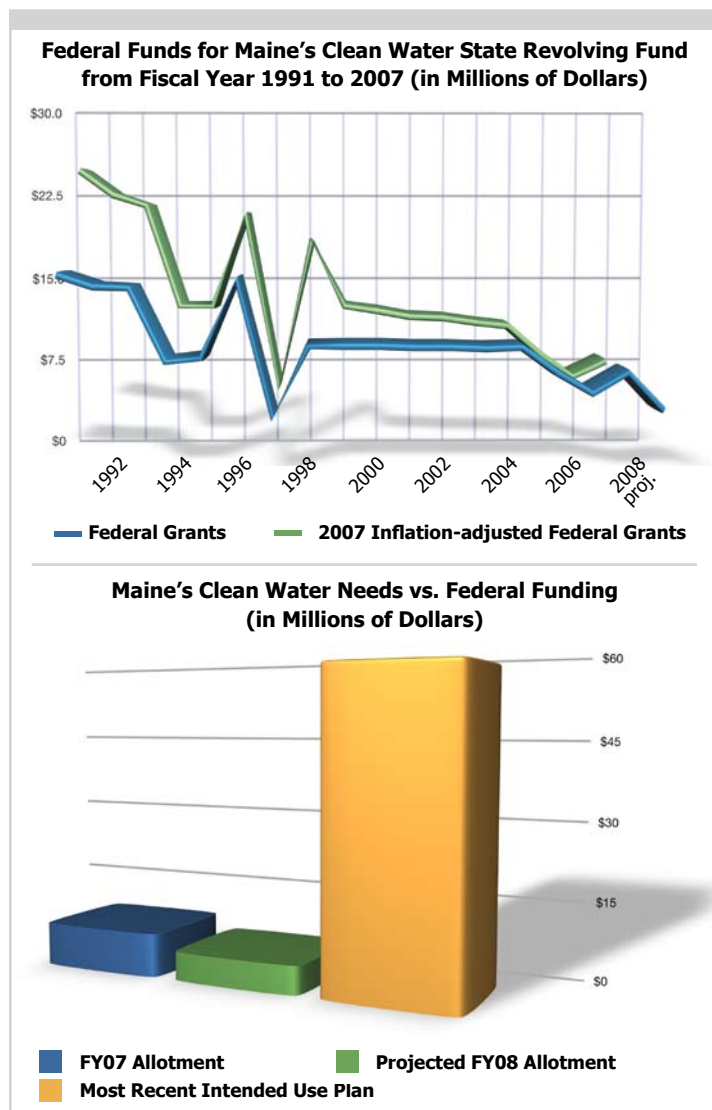
*"People understand bridges when they fall down...What they sometimes don't understand is that underground there's a whole other type of infrastructure that's falling apart and collapsing too." – James McLaughlin, Maine Department of Environmental Protection*

**Water Quality:** According to a 2004 state assessment, three percent of river miles and two percent of Maine's lakes suffer from impaired water quality. Additionally, 11 percent of estuaries and bays are inadequate for shellfish harvesting.

**Beach Closings:** A report by the Natural Resources Defense Council shows nationwide beach closings and swimming advisories were at an all-time high in 2006. Maine experienced 134 such events in 2006, up substantially from the 92 reported in 2005.

**Job Creation:** One billion dollars in federal infrastructure investment leads to approximately 47,500 new jobs. Addressing Maine's currently listed wastewater infrastructure needs would spur 2,802 employment opportunities.

For more information, download the full report, *Clear Waters: Why America Needs a Clean Water Trust Fund*, and analyses of all 50 states at: [www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/clearwaters](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/clearwaters)



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