

Why North Carolina Needs a National Clean Water Trust



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: North Carolina's master list of projects needing SRF funding contains 415 tasks that will cost an estimated \$1.437 billion to complete over the next five years. Meanwhile, the state was provided just \$19.3 million by the federal government in 2007, 1/75th of its needs, and was only able to pay for a little under 1/17th of its future needs even with state matches, returning loans, and leveraged funds.

Federal contributions to North Carolina's clean water funding efforts have decreased by 47.8 percent since the Clean Water SRF was fully implemented in fiscal 1991 and 65.9 percent when adjusted for inflation.

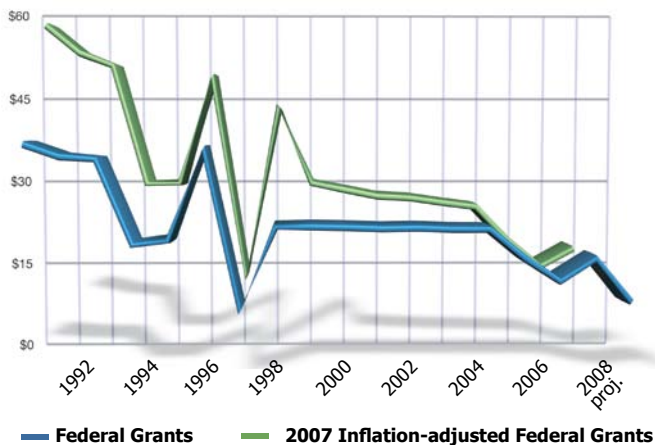
Water Quality: According to EPA's 2000 surveys of the state's water, 34 percent of assessed wetlands, seven percent of assessed river miles, and two percent of lakes suffer from impaired water quality.

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. North Carolina experienced significantly more closure and advisory events in 2006 – 346, one of which was an extended closing – up from 197 in 2005.

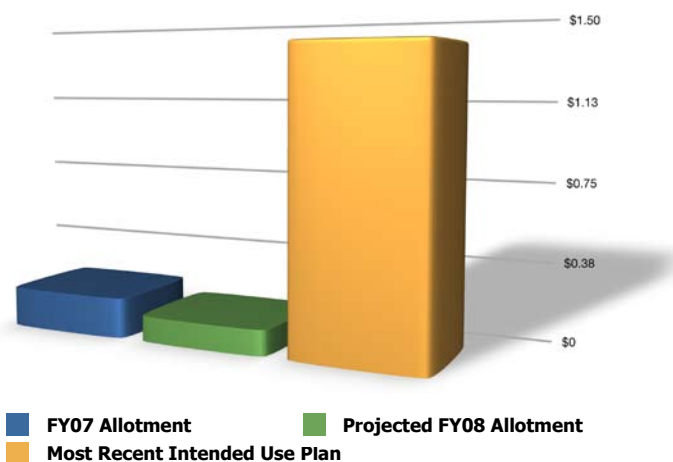
Job Creation: One billion dollars in federal infrastructure investment leads to approximately 47,500 new jobs. Addressing North Carolina's currently listed wastewater infrastructure needs would spur more than 53,880 employment opportunities.

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

Federal Funds for North Carolina's Clean Water State Revolving Fund from Fiscal Year 1991 to 2007 (in Millions of Dollars)



North Carolina's Clean Water Needs vs. Federal Funding (in Billions of Dollars)



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