

Why New York 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: New York's water needs outpace its current ability to fund projects by a large margin. Under current budget projections, New York will have only 55% of 2007's resources available for 2008 spending. The state's annual list presents 148 projects costing \$3.892 billion – more than 53 times its expected federal allotment – while its long-term projections count 793 projects at nearly \$11 billion.

Federal contributions to New York'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.

“New York's Clean Water needs have been steadily increasing...As annual federal funding levels for the CWSRF program have decreased, the backlog of projects needing financing [has] increased.”
 – Jimmy Ng, Program Manager, Western Projects Section, New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation

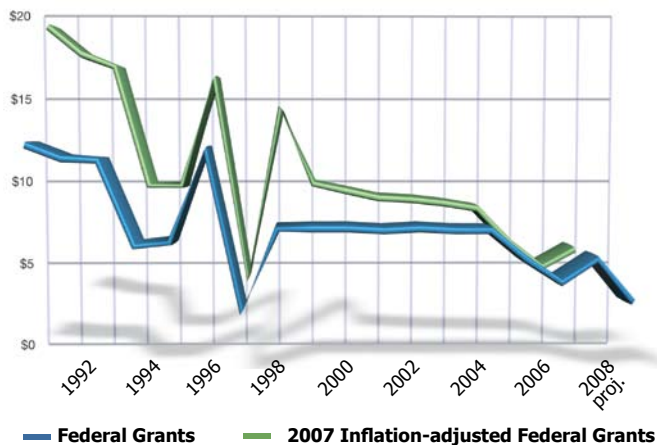
Water Quality: According to EPA's 2000 Water Quality Needs Survey assessments, 37 percent of river miles and 77 percent of the state's lake waters are impaired, 41 percent of waters do not support fish consumption, and nearly all of the state's Great Lakes waterways are seriously hampered.

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. New York experienced 1,280 closure or advisory events lasting six weeks or less in 2006, the highest number on record and a significant increase from the 827 such days in 2005.

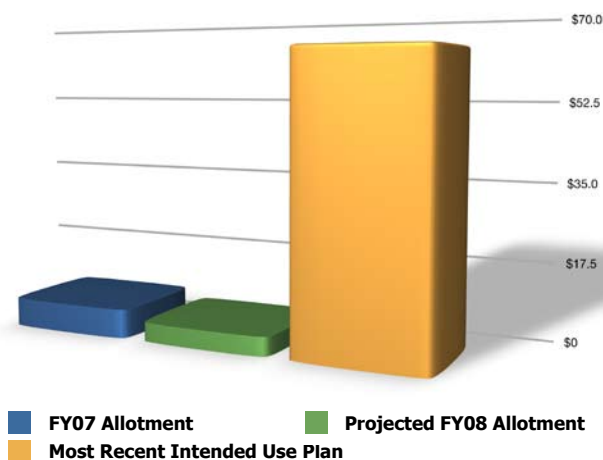
Job Creation: One billion dollars in federal infrastructure investment leads to approximately 47,500 new jobs. Addressing New York's currently listed wastewater infrastructure needs would spur 189,145 employment opportunities.

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 New York's Clean Water State Revolving Fund from Fiscal Year 1991 to 2007 (in Millions of Dollars)



New York's Clean Water Needs vs. Federal Funding (in Billions of Dollars)



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