

Wisconsin's Share in Federal Investment for Water Infrastructure

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
Thursday, 09 December 2021 10:44 -



Wisconsin to receive \$142 million in 2022 and approximately \$850 million over the next five years to invest in ensuring safe drinking water.

MADISON — On Wednesday, Gov. Tony Evers celebrated President Joe Biden’s bipartisan infrastructure bill that will expand efforts to deliver safe drinking water to Wisconsinites by infusing approximately \$850 million into communities across the state over the next five years. Gov. Evers [last month](#) praised the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act as a “Win for Wisconsin.”

The federal bill contains an array of expanded programs with substantial, new funding sources for Wisconsin, including \$142,703,000 for the 2022 allotment for state revolving loan programs funding water infrastructure projects. The bipartisan infrastructure bill is the largest investment in clean drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in U.S. history, delivering clean water to millions of families across the country, including Wisconsin.



“Clean drinking water is critically important for keeping our kids, our families, and our communities healthy and safe. Folks should be able to trust the water coming out of their tap, and that’s why making sure every Wisconsinite has access to safe, clean drinking water has been a top priority for my administration,” said Gov. Evers. “Whether it’s addressing contaminants like nitrates or ‘forever chemicals’ like PFAS or replacing lead pipes, the

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bipartisan infrastructure bill will allow us to continue the important work we've done to address water quality across our state."

Gov. Evers declared 2019 the [Year of Clean Drinking Water](#) to promote the importance of ensuring every Wisconsinite has access to safe, clean drinking water. The new federal funding will help address three priority safety concerns with Wisconsinites' drinking water, including PFAS, lead, and nitrates.

The Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimates that Wisconsin will receive \$347 million in clean water and \$522 million in safe drinking water revolving loan funds over the next five years. This funding includes a minimum of \$95 million in grants to address emerging contaminants such as PFAS and \$255 million to replace lead service lines.

PFAS are human-made chemicals that can be found in a variety of products, including non-stick cookware, fast food wrappers, stain-resistant sprays, and certain types of firefighting foam. These forever chemicals can build up, move through the soil, seep into groundwater, or be carried through the air. PFAS are known to pose several health risks such as certain types of cancers, heart issues, and developmental delays.

Nitrates are Wisconsin's most widespread groundwater contaminant, according to Wisconsin's Groundwater Coordinating Council. Nitrate contamination of groundwater is increasing in extent and severity across the state. Today, nitrates are at levels of concern in 74 public drinking water systems, and it is estimated that more than 10 percent of private wells have high nitrate levels.

Meanwhile, there are more than 170,000 lead service lines across Wisconsin that need replacing. Lead service lines can leach lead into drinking water, causing serious health problems, including brain damage among young children.

From rural towns to cities, the legislation also authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to award additional grants on a competitive basis for water infrastructure projects in disadvantaged communities, including low-income neighborhoods, communities with less than 10,000 people, and communities that would otherwise be unable to finance water projects needed to comply with federal water quality regulations.

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The bill also provides \$1 billion for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a program started in 2010 to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes, to accelerate environmental progress in Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, including reducing nutrient pollution and the toxic substances in the St. Louis River, Lower Green Bay and Fox River, Sheboygan River and Harbor, and Milwaukee Estuary areas. Funding allocations for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects in Wisconsin have not been announced.