

Why California 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: California's water needs outpace its current ability to fund projects by a large margin. The state's most recent Intended Use Plan lists 691 projects at a total cost of \$10.5 billion over the next five years. In 2007, the state received \$76.5 million in federal funding – enough to finance 1/137th of its needs.

Federal contributions to California's clean water funding efforts have decreased by 47.9 percent since the Clean Water SRF was fully implemented in fiscal 1991 and 65.9 percent when adjusted for inflation.

“There is no way that we can fund all of those projects. The SRF is one source of funds that communities have to pay for infrastructure. Having said that, it is generally recognized that there is a large need for water infrastructure funding nationwide.” – Liz Kanter, Information Officer with the state's Water Board

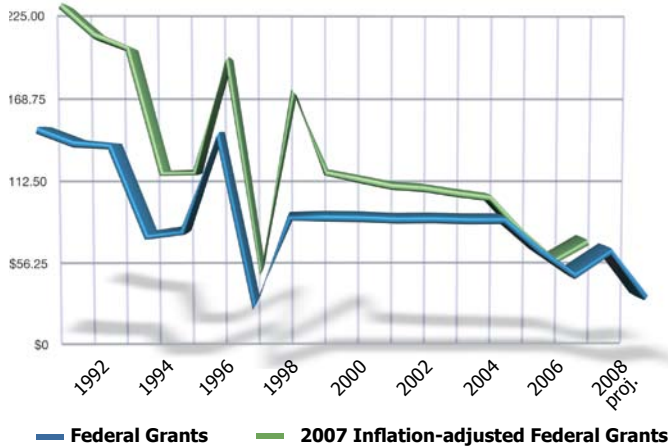
Water Quality: According to EPA's 2000 Water Quality Needs Survey assessments, 83 percent of river miles and 69 percent of the state's lake waters are impaired, nearly all wetlands, bays, and estuaries are impaired for aquatic life and fish consumption, 92 percent of estuaries do not support healthy shellfish, and 82 percent of the state's waters are impaired for swimming.

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. California experienced 4,644 closure or advisory events lasting six weeks or fewer in 2006.

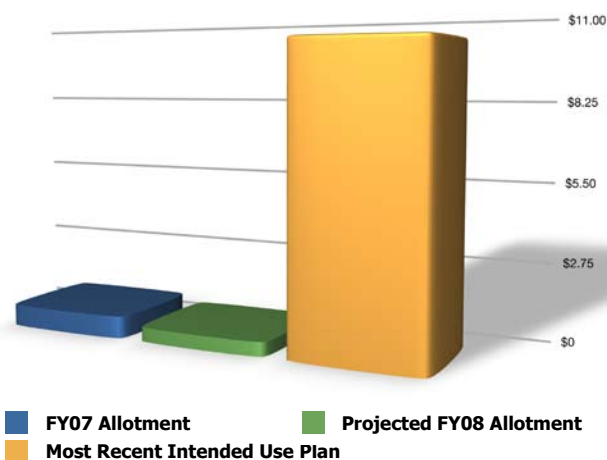
Job Creation: One billion dollars in federal infrastructure investment leads to approximately 47,500 new jobs. Addressing California's currently listed wastewater infrastructure needs would spur 498,750 employment opportunities.

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



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



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