

Why Delaware 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: Delaware's water needs outpace its current ability to fund projects by a large margin. The state's most recent Intended Use Plan lists \$322.1 million worth of projects, 94 times the state's 2007 federal SRF grant of \$5.2 million.

Federal contributions to Delaware's clean water funding efforts have decreased by 48.3 percent since the Clean Water SRF was fully implemented in fiscal 1991 and 66.2 percent when adjusted for inflation.

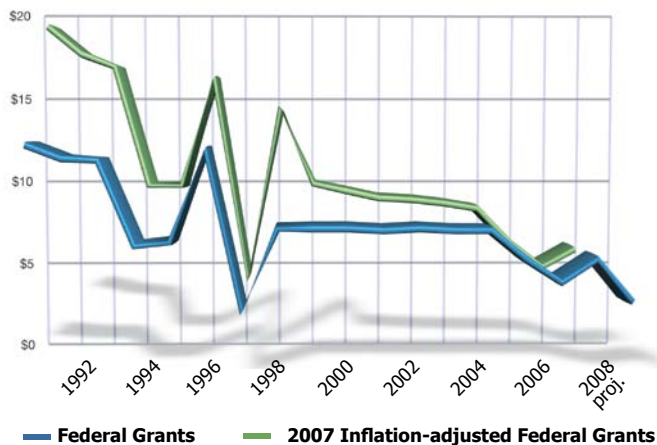
Water Quality: According to a 2004 state assessment, 99 percent of Delaware's river miles and 87 percent of its lake acres suffer from impaired water quality. Additionally, 100 percent of assessed estuaries and bays are impaired for aquatic life, 96 percent do not adequately support shellfish harvesting, and 59 percent are unsafe 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. Delaware issued two permanent swimming advisories in 2006.

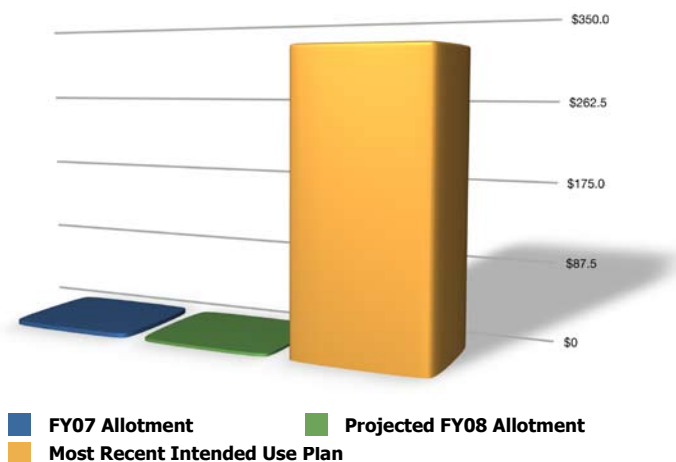
Job Creation: One billion dollars in federal infrastructure investment leads to approximately 47,500 new jobs. Addressing Delaware's currently listed wastewater infrastructure needs would spur 12,160 employment opportunities.

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



Delaware's Clean Water Needs vs. Federal Funding (in Millions of Dollars)



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