

## Why Oregon 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:** In 2008, Oregon expects to face an \$86.6 million shortfall between its anticipated spending on wastewater infrastructure and its \$133 million in needed improvements. The federal government's expected contributions will account for just 14 percent of the state's needs.

Federal contributions to Oregon'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.

*"The current amount for funding less this year than last year...demand for loans over the last couple of years has been brisk."* - Rick Watters, Division of Environmental Quality.

**Water Quality:** According to EPA's 2000 Water Quality Needs Survey assessment, 23 percent of Oregon's river miles and 24 percent of the state's lake waters are impaired, and 94 percent of estuaries do not support healthy shellfish.

**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. Oregon experienced 66 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 Oregon's currently listed wastewater infrastructure needs would spur 4,987 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](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/clearwaters)

