

News Release



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GAO Report Heightens Case for Water Infrastructure Funding

A recently released report by U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) documents a sharp increase in the need for federal funding of water and wastewater infrastructure projects. The Water Infrastructure Network (WIN) came to the same conclusion last year and is calling on Congress to pass legislation providing \$57 billion in federal funding over the next ten years to ensure environmental and health gains made under the Clean Water Act are not lost.

The GAO report titled *Water Infrastructure: Information on Federal and State Financial Assistance (The Report)*, contains strong language, stating that “U.S. drinking water and wastewater systems encompass thousands of treatment facilities, collection facilities, and related works, and well over a million miles of pipes and conduits. While the investment, made over decades, in these facilities is enormous, ***even more funds will be needed in the future to support efforts to maintain clean and safe water. The estimated cost of the investments needed to repair, replace or upgrade aging facilities, accommodate the nation’s growing population, and meet new water quality standards ranges from \$300 billion to \$1 trillion over the next 20 years, according to various estimates.***” (Emphasis added)

“Another government organization has now come out and acknowledges that the water infrastructure funding need is enormous,” says the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies’ (AMSA) Executive Director Ken Kirk. “I trust that Congress is listening to their financial advisors and we fully expect meaningful water infrastructure legislation in the weeks or months ahead,” Kirk added.

The *GAO Report* is the product of a request made by the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee last year as EPW considered a variety of legislative options in response to the work of WIN, AMSA and other key organizations seeking increased federal funding for the impending water infrastructure funding crisis. The scope of the *GAO Report* is limited to information on ***past*** capital improvement expenditures by federal agencies and states, but clearly demonstrates that federal expenditures must be significantly increased to meet the growing infrastructure need.

The *GAO Report* estimates that federal agencies spent \$44 billion from fiscal year 1991 through fiscal year 2000 on water infrastructure, but much of this funding is comprised of loans that many communities cannot afford or access. This current level of funding is simply insufficient to meet a funding shortfall that WIN estimates is \$23 billion a year for the next twenty years. For more information on AMSA see <http://www.amsa-cleanwater.org> and for WIN see <http://www.win-water.org>.

AMSA is a national trade association representing over 260 of the nation’s public wastewater utilities who are, despite a sharp decline in federal funding, dealing with the expensive challenges of an ailing infrastructure comprised of old, worn pipes and treatment facilities in desperate need of upgrades. These wastewater treatment officials are environmental practitioners dedicated to protecting and improving the nation’s public health and its water, and collectively treat and reclaim over 18 billion gallons of wastewater every day.