

## Proposed EPA Budget's Deepest Cuts Are to Clean and Safe Water

EPA has said one of its goals is to “provide for clean and safe water.” But the president’s proposed budget for FY 2020 tells a different story, requesting by its own count nearly \$1.7 *billion* in cuts to support that goal.

The centerpiece of this appalling proposal and the target of by far the largest cuts, **\$874 million**, is a pair of highly successful state revolving loan funds under the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts that support critical water and wastewater treatment infrastructure projects. The proposed cuts are \$300 million (26%) from the drinking water fund and \$574 million (34%) from the clean water fund, with each state cut by a proportionate share.

The two programs are widely and justly lauded for producing enormous improvements in our nation’s water infrastructure -- in one recent year the drinking water fund alone touched the lives of nearly 78 million people. These programs remain critical to ensuring clean and safe water. The evidence of the need for more investment in our nation’s water infrastructure is overwhelming, and shows that this is a time to increase, not cut these funds:

- More than 27 million Americans are served by 3,500 community water systems that do not fully meet health-based drinking water standards, and some of those standards are dated and may not be adequately protective.
- Tens of thousands of homes lack access to basic sanitation and drinking water, sometimes including flushing toilets and running water, exposing people to raw sewage and drinking water contaminants.
- Many community water systems draw their water from rivers and lakes, but nearly half a million square miles of those waters are listed as “impaired,” which means they fail to meet one or more standards for water quality, *and the list is growing each year.*
- An overwhelming majority, 215 million of our nation’s people, live within two miles of a polluted lake, river, stream, or ocean area.
- Each year our country suffers about 240,000 water main breaks, and billions of gallons of raw sewage are discharged into local surface waters from sewer overflows, compromising water quality. These problems could be reduced or prevented by upgrading and repairing our aging water infrastructure, replacing leaking transmission pipes and deteriorated storage and treatment equipment.
- A recent needs survey showed that more than \$420 billion will be needed to maintain and improve the nation’s drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years, by constructing, restoring or rehabilitating hundreds of thousands of miles of pipes and thousands of treatment plants, storage tanks and other key assets.

**Cuts to Programs to Protect and Restore our Nation’s Great Water Bodies** Another target of the budget cuts is EPA geographic programs, which provide federal leadership and funding for protecting and restoring nationally significant waters. The budget proposes to eviscerate nearly all of those programs by a total cut of more than \$140 million, with no funding at all for many important water bodies such as Puget Sound, Long Island Sound, and Lake Champlain, and a \$66 million (90%) cut to funding for the Chesapeake Bay.

The budget also proposes massive cuts to EPA water protection programs.

### **Cuts to EPA Water Pollution Protection (19%)**

**Clean Water Act water pollution control programs** would be cut by \$48 million (19%), from \$258 million to \$210 million, despite the water quality problems facing our nation's waters. Specific cuts outlined in the budget include:

- **Clean Water Act programs to protect surface water quality** and address harmful pollutants in rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters would be cut by \$11 million.
- **Marine pollution** funding to support work on ocean discharges of dredged material would be cut from \$11.1 million to zero.
- **National estuaries and coastal waterways programs** that help states address harmful pollutants in rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters would be cut from \$26.7 million to zero.

And despite the fact that Administrator Wheeler identifies safe drinking water as our greatest environmental challenge--more pressing than climate change--the budget actually *cuts* funding for EPA drinking water programs by \$8 million (8%), from \$102 million to \$94 million.

### **Cuts for State Water Programs**

Along with these cuts for EPA programs, the budget also proposes cutting **state water protection programs by \$300 million**, including:

- \$77 million in cuts to state water pollution grants (33%) to help states protect and restore water quality by issuing permits, monitoring water quality, developing water quality standards, conducting cleanup plans, identifying violators and taking enforcement actions.
- \$171 million in cuts by eliminating grants for nonpoint source management to address the largest remaining source of unregulated pollutants such as contaminated runoff from a wide variety of sources. Nonpoint source pollution has been identified as a source of impairment for more than 80% of the nation's impaired rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs.
- State categorical grants to protect water quality at beaches, previously funded at \$9.55 million, would be eliminated.

The budget also proposes 33% cuts in support for state programs to protect drinking water:

- Grants to supervise public drinking water supplies would be cut from \$102 million to \$68 million (33%).
- Grants to protect underground sources of drinking water by underground injection control would be cut 33% to \$7 million from \$10.5 million.