

## 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 FY2021 tells a different story, requesting by its own count nearly \$1.39 *billion* in cuts to support that goal.

The centerpiece of this appalling proposal and the target of by far the largest cuts, **\$782 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 \$263 million (23%) from the drinking water fund and \$519 million (32%) 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.
- Billions of gallons of raw sewage is discharged into local surface waters annually from combined sewer systems that carry wastewater from buildings and stormwater from street drains.
- Each year, about 240,000 water mains break, wasting over two trillion gallons of treated drinking water.
- A recent survey showed that \$472 billion will be needed over the next 20 years to ensure the safety of our nation’s drinking water supply.

The proposed budget’s infrastructure cuts go beyond these revolving loan funds, by proposing another \$111 million in water infrastructure cuts:

- \$51 million (96%) in cuts to basic drinking water and sanitation infrastructure improvements, like flushing toilets and running water for poor, isolated Alaska Native villages and U.S. communities along the U.S.-Mexico border that disproportionately lack such services and face exposure to raw sewage

- \$35 million (58%) in cuts to support for water quality protection under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Fund
- \$25 million cut by *eliminating* funding to assist public water systems in small and disadvantaged communities under the Safe Water for Small and Disadvantaged Communities program.

This does not include an \$11 million ( 42%) cut in funding for lead testing in schools.

### **Cuts to Programs to Protect and Restore our Nation’s Great Water Bodies**

America’s majestic waters are national treasures and part of our national identity, but their ecological health, sadly, has been jeopardized by pollution from a variety of sources. EPA geographic programs have provided federal leadership in cooperative efforts by states, tribes, and local governments to address the complex problems of protecting and restoring nationally significant waters. The budget proposes cuts of more than \$180 million, eliminating any funding at all for vital water bodies such as Puget Sound, Long Island Sound, the Gulf of Mexico, San Francisco Bay, South New England Estuary, and Lake Champlain. It pays only lip service to funding, with a \$77 million (90%) cut to funding for the Chesapeake Bay, the nation’s largest estuary, whose watershed is home to 18 million people.

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

The budget also proposes massive \$280 million cuts to state water protection programs including:

- \$70 million in cuts to state water pollution grants 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.
- \$172 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 \$9.2 million, would be eliminated, and funding for wetlands program development would be cut by 31% to \$9.8 million.
- The budget also proposes 36% cuts in support for state programs to protect drinking water:
  - Grants to supervise public drinking water supplies would be cut \$38 million (36%).
  - Grants to protect underground sources of drinking water by underground injection control would be cut by \$3 million (31%).