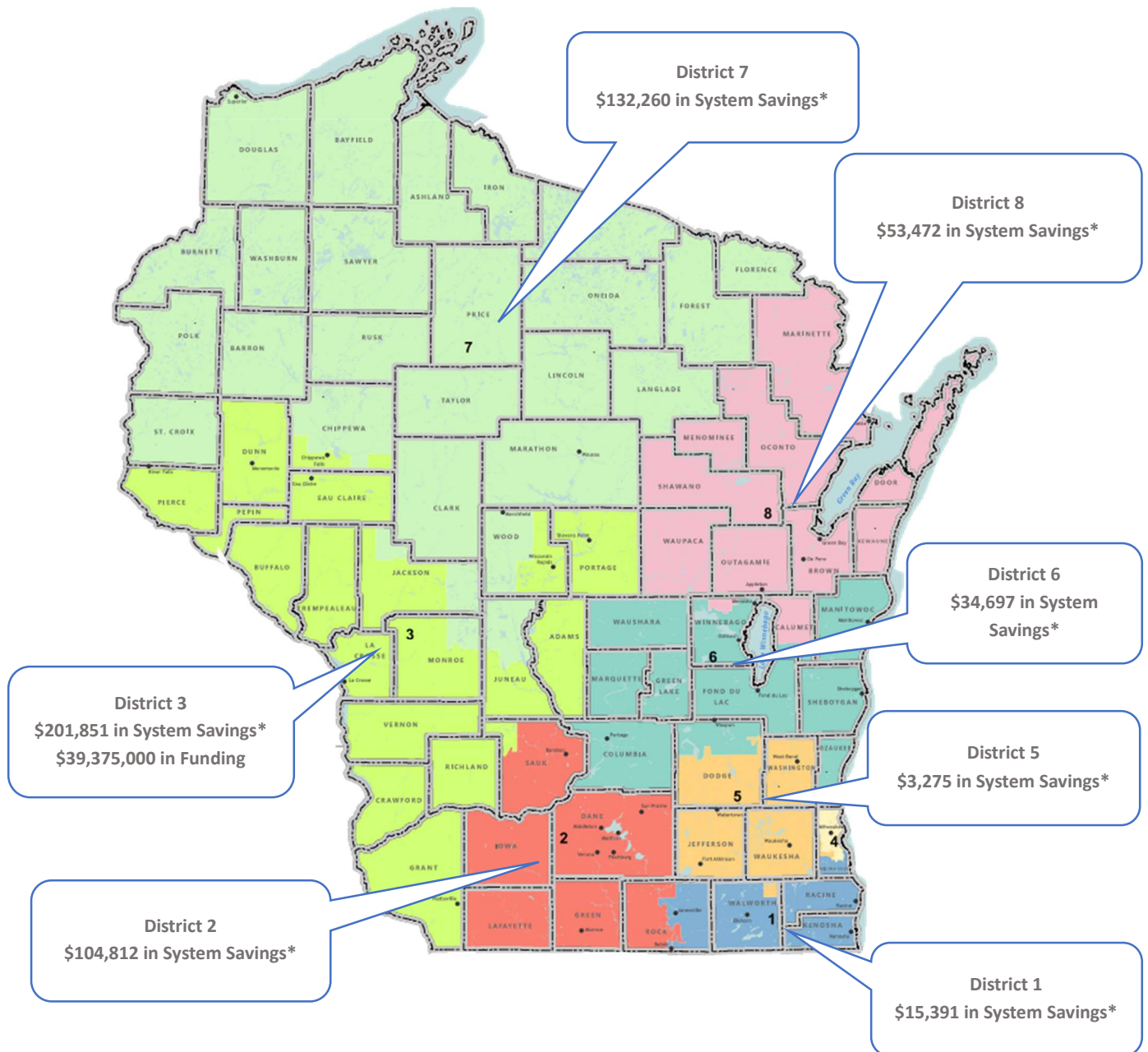




WISCONSIN RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

2025 IMPACT ON WISCONSIN



** Includes significant visits only. Does not reflect all WRWA assistance provided throughout the year.*





Provides Training...

WRWA continues to be the leading provider of training in the state of Wisconsin to those in the water and wastewater industries. In fact, WRWA is one of the leading trainers of water and wastewater system personnel in the nation. In 2025, WRWA conducted a total of **147** training sessions and events. These were attended by **5,350** operators, managers, administrative personnel, plumbers, and business representatives.

Technical Assistance...

Providing technical assistance to operators of small rural water and wastewater systems throughout Wisconsin is the backbone of our services. WRWA conducted **3,207** on-site technical assistance visits in 2025 in addition to over **5,670** phone calls to and from systems. WRWA currently has a field staff of 11 providing on-site technical assistance to water and wastewater systems in the state.

WRWA technical assistance is provided in several areas, including regulatory compliance, utility management, solving distribution system problems, treatment, emergency response, source water protection, system operations assistance, energy efficiency, and providing loaner equipment.

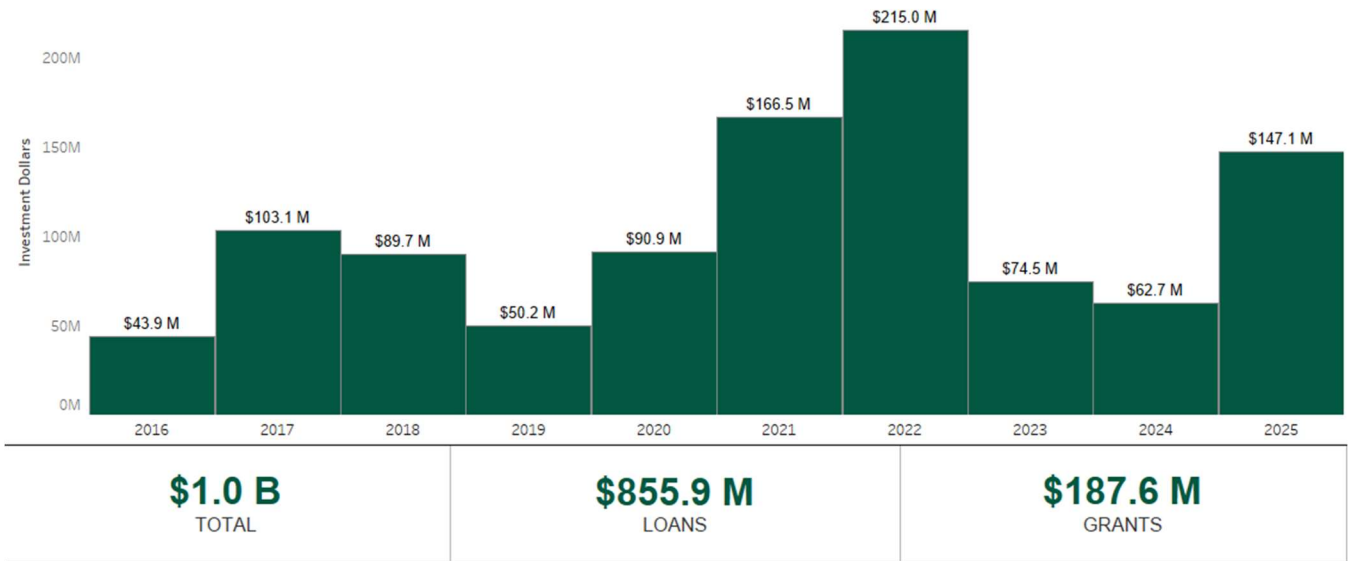
And Resources for Project Funding!

WRWA works closely with USDA Rural Development to help rural communities secure loans, grants, and loan guarantee programs necessary for replacing worn out equipment and expanding operations. During 2025, Rural Development assisted the town of Campbell with a low-interest loan for \$30,835,000 and a grant of \$8,540,000 to install a municipal water system necessary to reduce their high levels of PFAS. The 4,500 residents of Campbell have been on state-funded bottled water for five years due to the high PFAS levels.



Rural Development Community Facilities & Water/Environmental Project Funding History – All Districts

District: All
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental

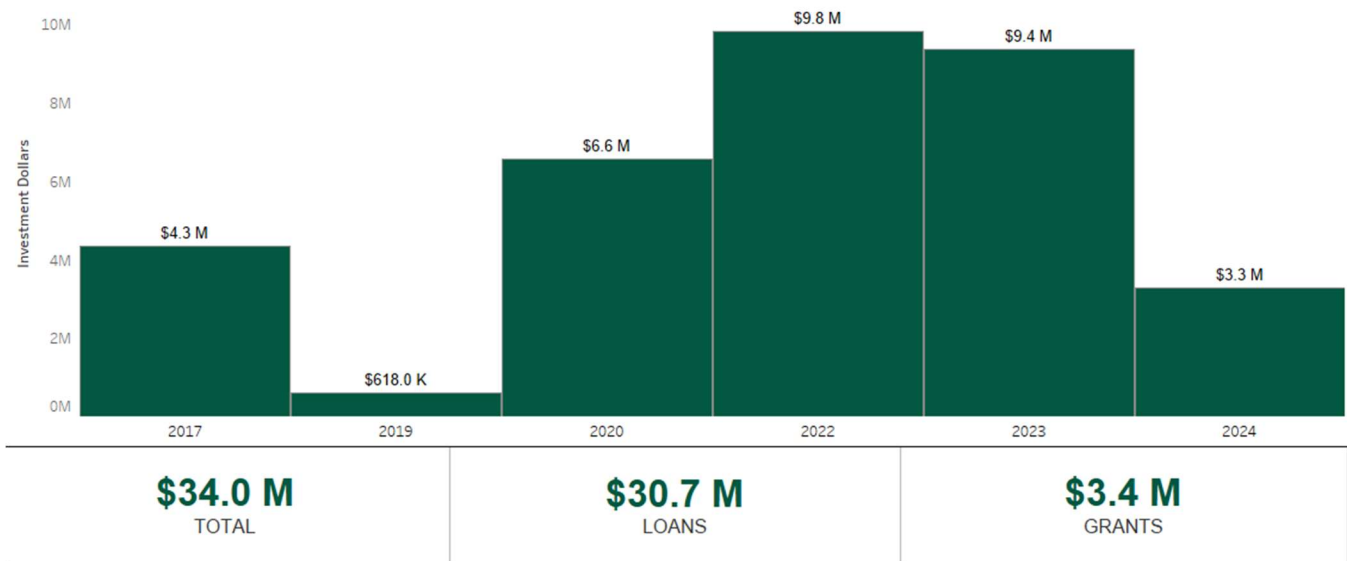


The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: All. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

Rural Development Community Facilities & Water/Environmental Project Funding History By District

District: 1

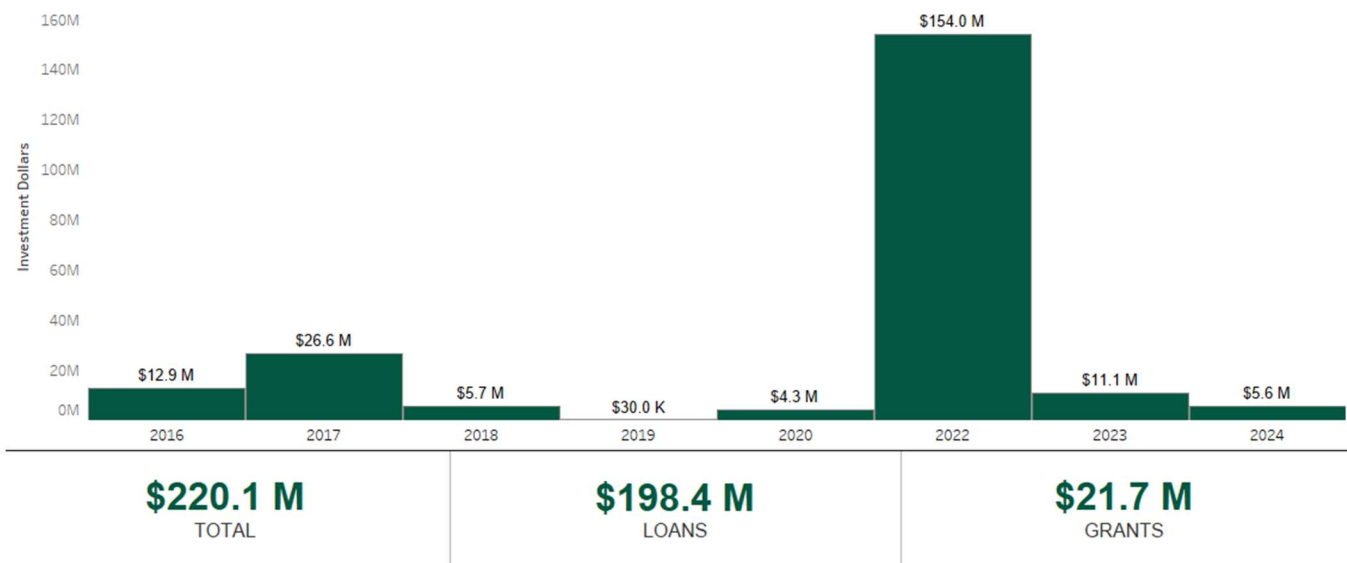
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 1. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

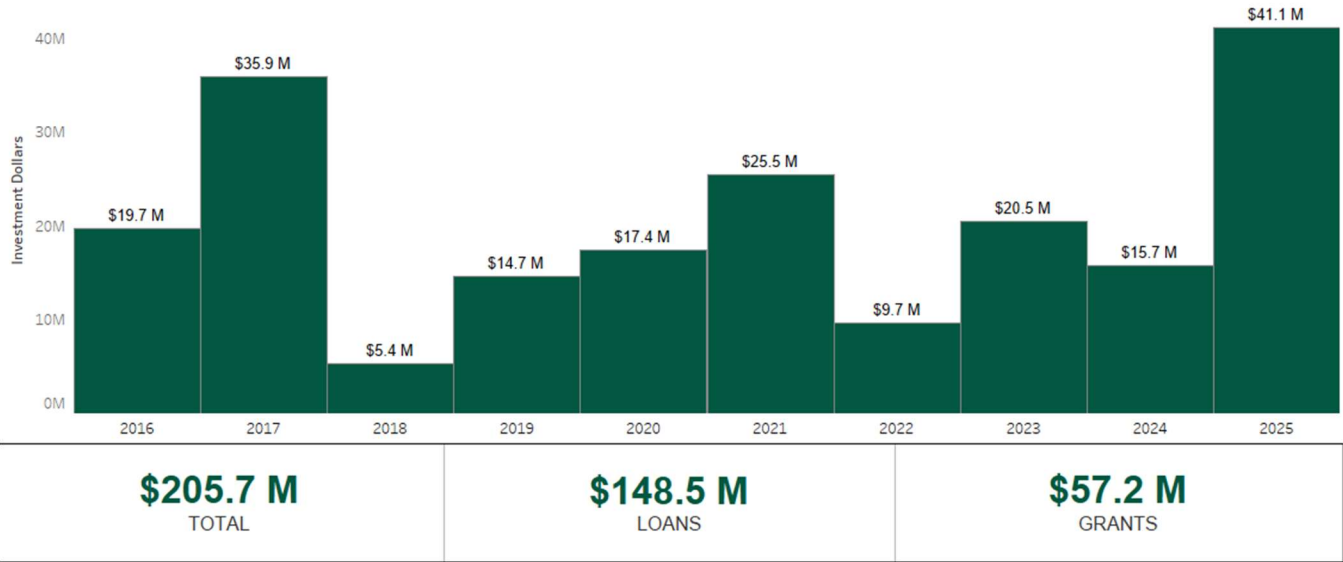
District: 2

Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



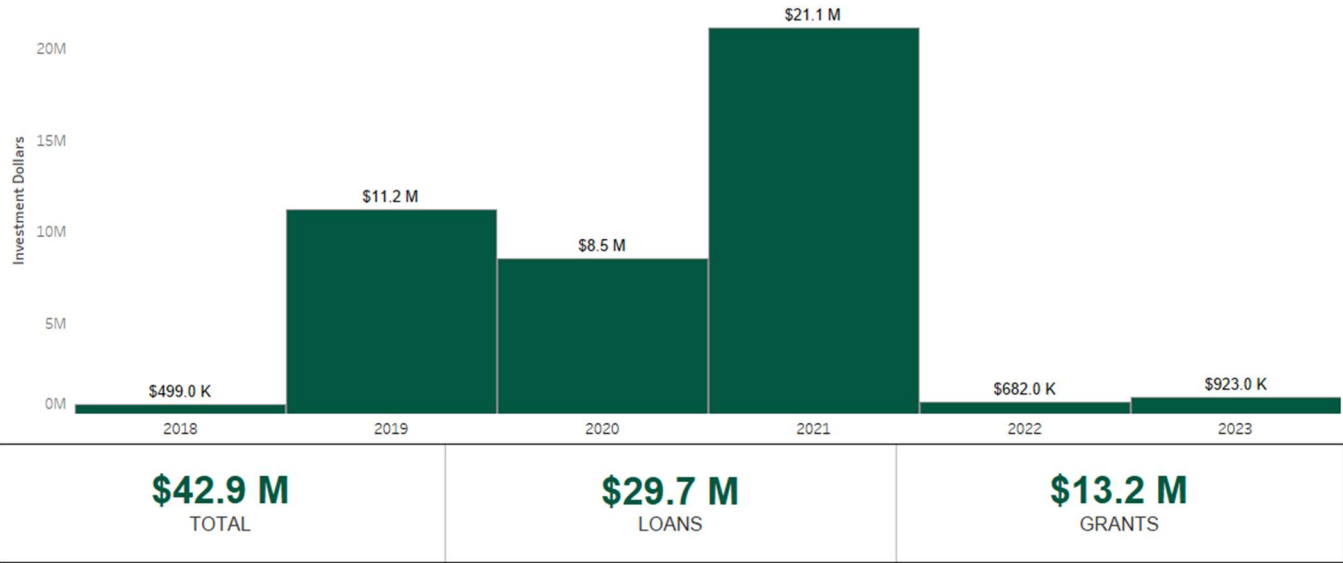
The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 2. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

District: 3
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



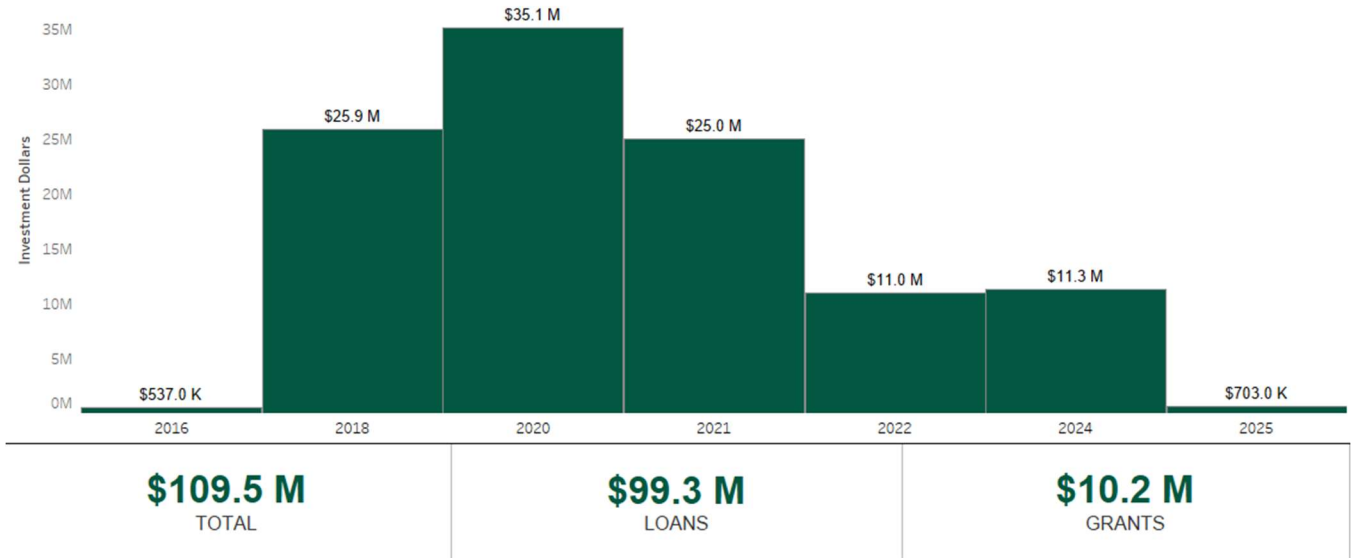
The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 3. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

District: 5
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



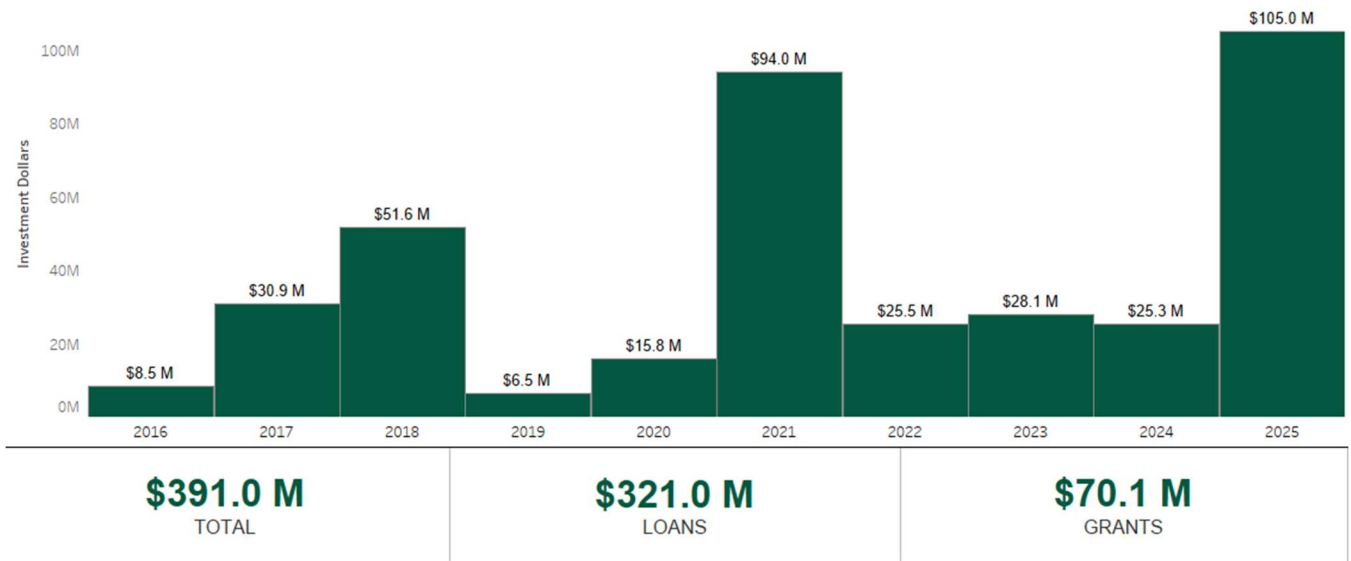
The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 5. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

District: 6
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



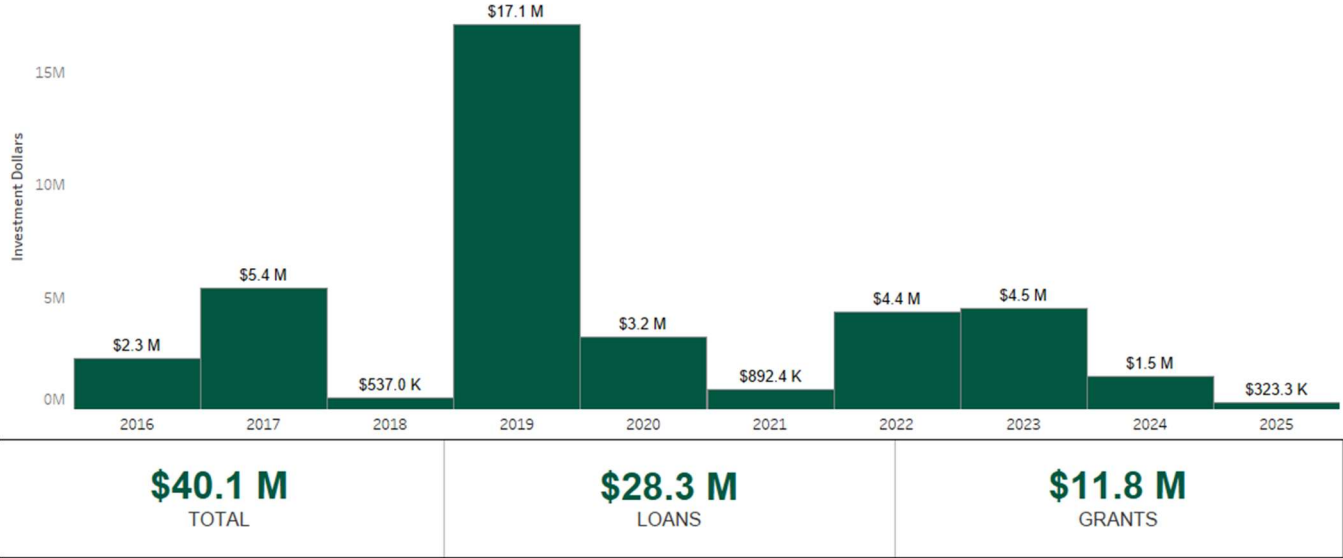
The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 6. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

District: 7
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 7. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.

District: 8
Program Area: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental



The view shows Wisconsin. Congressional districts shown: 8. Program areas shown: Community Facilities & Water and Environmental. Investment types shown: All. All fiscal years will always be shown.



National Rural Water Association

Rural Water FY2027 Appropriations Priorities

February
2026

Dear Congress: Please prioritize what is working.

Small and rural communities have the very important public responsibility of complying with all applicable federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act regulations and for supplying the public with safe drinking water and sanitation every second of every day. Over 91% of the approximately 50,000 community water systems serve fewer than 10,000 persons and 81% serve fewer than 3,300 persons. Small and rural communities often have difficulty complying with complicated federal mandates and providing safe/affordable drinking water and sanitation due to limited economies of scale and lack of technical expertise. This difficulty is eased due to ongoing and continuing support offered through rural water training and technical assistance programs as highlighted below.

	Initiative	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Enacted	FY2026 Enacted	FY2027 Request
USDA	Circuit Rider Technical Assistance	\$21,180,000	\$21,817,000	\$23,900,000	\$24,617,000
	Wastewater Disposal Technical Assistance	\$37,500,000	\$35,000,000	\$35,000,000	\$35,000,000
	Grassroots Source Water Protection Program	\$7,500,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000
	Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program	\$596,404,000	\$595,972,000	\$445,864,564 ^A	\$500,000,000
	Water & Waste Disposal Revolving Loan Funds	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
EPA	Safe Drinking Water Act Technical Assistance	\$30,700,000	\$30,700,000	\$30,700,000	\$35,000,000
	Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance	\$27,000,000	\$25,500,000	\$25,500,000	\$26,000,000
	Clean Water State Revolving Fund	\$1,638,861,000	\$1,638,861,000	\$1,638,861,000 ^B	\$1,638,861,000
	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	\$1,126,101,000	\$1,126,101,000	\$1,126,101,000 ^C	\$1,126,101,000
DOL	National Water and Wastewater Operator Apprenticeship Program	Language included	Language included	TBD	\$20,000,000

A: WEP Earmarks \$110,488,564 B: CWSRF Earmarks: \$892,762,272 C: DWSRF Earmarks: \$715,364,627

How Can Representatives/Senators Support Rural Water?

1. Write the Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs and Ranking Members in support of Rural Water's **five** funding priorities (or include in Members' formal appropriations requests);
2. Personally contact the Subcommittee Chairs and Ranking Members in support of Rural Water's **five** funding priorities; and
3. Ask the key staff person in each office to contact the Subcommittees in support of Rural Water's **five** funding priorities.

Subcommittee	House	Senate
USDA	Chair Andy Harris (MD) Ranking Member Sanford Bishop (GA)	Chair John Hoeven (ND) Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen (NH)
Interior (EPA)	Chair Mike Simpson (ID) Ranking Member Chellie Pingree (ME)	Chair Lisa Murkowski (AK) Ranking Member Jeff Merkley (OR)
Labor	Chair Robert Aderholt (AL) Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (CT)	Chair Shelley Moore Capito (WV) Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin (WI)

The National Rural Water Association represents over 31,000 small and rural community members dedicated to drinking water quality, environmental protection and public health protection.

Description of Rural Water Priorities

1. USDA Circuit Riders

Since 1980, Circuit Riders have provided the primary assistance to small communities for the operation of safe and clean drinking water supplies and compliance with water regulations. This assistance protects the sizable investment the federal government has made in rural water infrastructure. Circuit Riders are in the field every day helping systems with compliance, operations, maintenance, management, disaster response and training. The Circuit Rider Program has long been one of USDA's most successful public-private partnerships, efficiently and effectively using appropriated funds to provide technical assistance and training to rural communities through state based nonprofit associations.

2. USDA Farm Service Agency Grassroots Source Water Protection

This is the only statewide local community-based initiative ensuring environmentally progressive local land-use decisions without the controversy and bureaucracy of regulatory programs. It provides each state with at least one full-time person to organize and assist rural communities, farmers, and other land-use interests in the implementation of source water protection plans including non-point source (runoff) protection practices in agriculture regions. This initiative allows the people who benefit from environmental protection to take responsibility for achieving it—ensuring its success and eliminating local controversy.

3. EPA Safe Drinking Water Act Technical Assistance and Training

Since 1977, small and rural communities have relied on local/on-site technical assistance and training for compliance with the myriad of federal EPA regulations, avoiding EPA fines, and operating drinking water and wastewater supplies. According to small and rural communities, EPA-funded local initiatives are the most effective environmental protection efforts for drinking water & wastewater, ground water, source water, and compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance—rural water provides them the shared technical resources to do it.

4. EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance

Small and rural communities have more difficulty affording public wastewater service due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. This challenge is compounded by the fact that rural communities have lower average median household incomes and often have higher rates of poverty. PL 155-270, enacted in October 2018, authorized a new technical assistance program for small and rural communities to improve water quality, operate and maintain public wastewater treatment utilities and comply with federal Clean Water Act standards.

5. National Rural Water Apprenticeship Program

Since 2016, NRWA has collaborated with State Rural Water Associations, USDA, DOL, EPA, and local rural water utilities to build the first nationally recognized DOL Registered Apprenticeship Program for water and wastewater system operators. Employment data indicates up to 50% of the rural water workforce will leave the water industry over the next 10 years. Rural water and wastewater utilities need a pipeline of skilled workers to help ensure clean and safe water for the public and to maintain the water infrastructure necessary to keep rural service areas economically viable. To date, thirty-five State Rural Water Associations have federally approved Registered Apprenticeship Programs and are currently offering a job creation program specifically designed by industry leaders to attract, train and retain the next generation rural water workforce with over 1200 apprentices enrolled or graduated so far.



NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **Circuit Rider Program**

Appropriations bill: Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: John Hoeven (ND)

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: Jeanne Shaheen (NH)

House subcommittee Chairman: Andy Harris (MD)

House subcommittee Ranking Member: Sanford Bishop (GA)

Department: United States Department of Agriculture

Agency: Rural Utilities Service (within Rural Development)

Appropriations account: Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program Account

Authorization: 7 USC 1926(a)(22)

FY2027 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History	
FY2021	\$20,157,000
FY2022	\$20,762,000
FY2023	\$21,180,000
FY2024	\$21,817,000
FY2026	\$23,900,000

FY2027 request: \$24,617,000

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests an appropriation of \$24,617,000 for the Circuit Rider Program for FY2027.

The Circuit Rider Program is a five-year competitive contract that was awarded to NRWA on November 1, 2020. The final year of that contract began on November 1, 2024, and expired on November 1, 2025. On October 31, 2025, USDA granted a 6-month extension to the existing contract. The FY2026 enacted level of \$23,900,000 fully funded the fifth-year contract costs and included additional funding to add a full-time position within the State of Rhode Island. This increased the total number of Circuit Riders from 132 to 133.

The Rural Development contracting officer requires NRWA to include a cost escalator for annual inflationary purposes necessary to maintain 132 Circuit Riders and to provide the same level of services. Also required is the establishment of a management reserve account to address unforeseen circumstances.

USDA Circuit Rider Justification: Increase the FY2026 enacted level of \$23,900,000 by 3%, or \$717,000, to \$24,617,000 for FY2027.

USDA Rural Development Circuit Rider: Since 1980, the Circuit Rider Program has been one of USDA's most successful public-private partnerships, efficiently and effectively using appropriated funds to provide technical expertise, training, regulatory compliance, management and disaster assistance to rural communities through state based nonprofit organizations.

There are currently 132 full-time permanent Circuit Riders deployed in rural America in all 50 states and Territories. As previously mentioned, this funding request is based on the federal contract requirements and regardless of the appropriations level, the terms and conditions of the contract require NRWA to continue to provide the same level of service, even with interrupted, delayed or reduced federal funding.

State Rural Water Associations provide non-federal matching money to cover their actual cost. In the last reporting cycle, State Rural Water Associations provided \$1,933,947 in non-federal funds to cover the full cost of delivering this program.

In addition to the core services Circuit Riders have provided for decades, demand for these critical services has increased and evolved. Included in these expanded efforts are additional emergency response and recovery efforts and requests, cyber security assistance, and increased regulatory demands to include compliance with the Lead and Copper and PFAS rules. Circuit Riders have also increased their assistance to address operator vacancies attributed to an aging workforce and addressing the increased challenges related to operating and maintaining aging infrastructure.

Experience and Benefits: Personnel turnover within this program is very rare. Circuit Riders have approximately 3,000 years of combined experience in the water and wastewater industry. This experience and dedication to the overall mission reaps rewards in additional cost savings provided to the communities served. With this seasoned experienced staff, salary and benefit costs are higher.

Circuit Riders Protect Federal Investments and Public Health: Circuit Rider assistance has become even more critical with the loss of over 1,000 USDA Rural Development staff in the field. Circuit Riders' on-site, hands-on assistance, combined with trusted peer-to-peer relationships, enhances all operations including fiscal management, disaster assistance, governance, regulatory compliance, all essential for the sustainability of water and wastewater utilities. This assistance enhances the water system's ability to repay their government debt, protects the low cost of this program while maintaining and enhancing the public health in rural communities. In addition, the Circuit Riders are considered essential employees to perform Mission Critical Services for the U.S. Government during a lapse of appropriations and public health emergencies.

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **Grassroots Source Water Protection Program**

Appropriations bill: Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: John Hoeven (ND)

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: Jeanne Shaheen (NH)

House subcommittee Chairman: Andy Harris (MD)

House subcommittee Ranking Member: Sanford Bishop (GA)

Department: United States Department of Agriculture

Agency: Farm Service Agency

Appropriations account: Grassroots Source Water Protection Program

Authorization: 16 U.S.C. 3839bb–2

FY2027 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History	
FY2021	\$6,500,000
FY2022	\$6,500,000
FY2023	\$7,500,000
FY2024	\$7,000,000
FY2026	\$7,500,000

FY2027 request: \$7,500,000

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests an appropriation of \$7,500,000, consistent with the FY2026 enacted bill, for the FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection Program. NRWA requested, and Congress appropriated \$6.5 million to carry out this initiative from FY2016 to FY2022. For FY2023, Congress increased this account by \$1,000,000 to allow additional activities to include, but are not limited to, enhanced assistance to address nutrient run-off from highly erodible cropland; decline in water quantity and quality related to drought; chemical security mapping; and coordination implementing source water protection practices in high priority areas, as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

NRWA currently maintains 55 full-time Grassroots Source Water Protection Program Specialists in the field. Every state has one full-time Source Water Specialist with two Specialists currently provided in Colorado, California, Kansas, Minnesota, and Montana.

FSA Source Water Justification: Enact the FY2026 funding level to maintain current field staff, services, and activities in FY2027.

Grassroots Source Water Protection Initiative: Protecting public health is the top priority in every water and wastewater system in America. Since 1990, the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) and State Rural Water Associations have assisted water utilities and rural communities in identifying, controlling, and eliminating pollutants from the nation's water resources. The NRWA Source Water Protection Program is built around small water utilities, local businesses, agriculture, government, and other groups working together to develop and implement strategies to protect their drinking water sources. It is a voluntary, grassroots planning effort that builds local responsibility and creates more sustainable communities.

Source Water Protection: The FY2027 source water protection program appropriation of \$7,500,000 will allow NRWA to maintain 55 full-time field employees to continue to provide this essential service with enhanced activities.

Prevention vs. Remediation: This cooperative program has made significant progress in reducing point source pollution from industrial, agricultural, municipal, and even household sources. The program has also made progress in the challenging area of nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution results from activities over large areas, such as runoff from agriculture, industry, and transportation that flows into water sources. In addition to protecting the health and welfare of U.S. communities, source water protection efforts save consumers money. The USDA estimates damages from soil erosion costs between \$2 billion to \$8 billion per year. The EPA estimates that public water systems spend an additional \$200 million per year just to remove excess nitrate to meet federal drinking water standards. A small community's nominal investment in implementing and adhering to a source water protection plan can avoid substantial remediation costs.

This is the only statewide local community-based initiative ensuring environmentally progressive local land-use decisions without the controversy and bureaucracy of regulatory programs. Currently there are 55 full-time specialists employed to organize and assist rural communities, farmers, and other land-use interests in the implementation of source water protection plans including nonpoint source (runoff) protection practices in agriculture regions. State Associations provided \$342,151 of non-federal matching funds to carry out this initiative from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. This initiative allows the people who benefit from environmental protection to take responsibility for achieving it- ensuring its success and eliminating local controversy. Through comprehensive planning efforts that identify potential threats to the water supply, communities proactively maintain local sources of safe and clean water. Additionally, by developing and implementing a source water protection plan, communities can help minimize the future need for expensive upgrades to treatment facilities.

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **EPA Safe Drinking Water Act Technical Assistance**

Appropriations bill: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: Lisa Murkowski (AK)

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: Jeff Merkley (OR)

House subcommittee Chairman: Mike Simpson (ID)

House subcommittee Ranking Member: Chellie Pingree (ME)

Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Appropriations account: Environmental Programs and Management

Authorization: Safe Drinking Water Act (42 USC 300j-1(e))

FY2027 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History

FY2021	\$21,700,000
FY2022	\$25,700,000
FY2023	\$30,700,000
FY2024	\$30,700,000
FY2026	\$30,700,000

FY2027 request: \$35,000,000

The National Rural Water Association requests report language, consistent with the House FY2026 reported bill (see below) appropriating \$35,000,000 under this account to provide \$26,000,000 dedicated to the technical assistance activities as prescribed under the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Act. Small and rural communities rely on local/on-site technical assistance and training for compliance with federal EPA regulations, avoiding EPA fines, and operating drinking and wastewater supplies.

Report Language: *Environmental Protection: National Priorities.*- The bill provides \$35,000,000. The Committee directs that funds be used for a competitive grant program for qualified non-profit organizations to provide technical assistance for improved water quality or safe drinking water, adequate wastewater to small systems, or individual private well owners. The Agency shall provide \$26,000,000 for Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act, for activities specified under Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-1(e)(8)). The Agency is directed to provide funding to the most qualified and experienced non-profit organizations in providing technical assistance to small water systems and to issue the grant awards from this program on an annual basis.

EPA Technical Assistance Justification: Enact the House's FY2026 reported level of \$35,000,000 and follow the Congressional intent of Public Law 114-98 for FY2027.

EPA Technical Assistance Authorization: The President signed the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act into law (Public Law 114-98) on December 11, 2015. The House of Representatives unanimously passed the bill on November 30, 2015 and the Senate on June 9, 2015 (also unanimously). The authorization was modified in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (H.R.3684, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) to ensure the funding is used in the most beneficial manner for rural and small communities.

The purpose of the Act is to require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) follow Congressional intent in administering directed appropriations to assist small and rural communities to comply with federal environmental mandates. The Act authorizes the EPA to provide technical assistance to small and rural communities to assist them with: (1) compliance with the myriad of federal regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act; (2) operation and maintenance of their water utilities; and (3) public health protection through the supply of safe public drinking water.

Technical Assistance Demand: Small and rural communities often have a difficult time, due to their limited customer base and technical capacities, providing safe water and complying with federal standards. This is compounded by the fact that small and rural communities often have lower median household incomes and higher water rates compared to larger communities. As a result, the cost of compliance is often dramatically higher per household.

The vast majority of U.S. drinking water supplies are small; 91% of community water systems serve a population of fewer than 10,000 people. Some communities are so small they rely on volunteers to operate their drinking water supply. Small communities in violation of the federal rules are subject to \$25,000 per-day civil penalties. We are urging Congress to fully fund the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act portion at \$26,000,000 and ensure funding is limited to qualified, experienced technical assistance providers to effectively serve the needs of rural utilities

Experience: Since 1977, NRWA has assisted small and rural communities in providing safe drinking water and ensured access to the expertise of an experienced, trustworthy technician. This technical assistance provides for efficient system operation and maintenance and affordable compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act mandates. Small and rural communities are struggling under new federal regulations, complex funding program applications, and continuing mandatory operator training requirements. Recent EPA awards for this initiative do not adequately address the needs of small and rural communities that need help as soon as possible.

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance**

Appropriations bill: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: Lisa Murkowski (AK)

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: Jeff Merkley (OR)

House subcommittee Chairman: Mike Simpson (ID)

House subcommittee Ranking Member: Chellie Pingree (ME)

Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Appropriations account: State and Tribal Assistance Grants Account

Authorization: America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (section 4103), "*Technical Assistance for Treatment Works*"

FY2027 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History

FY2021	\$18,000,000
FY2022	\$20,000,000
FY2023	\$27,000,000
FY2024	\$25,500,000
FY2026	\$25,500,000

FY2027 request: \$26,000,000

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests \$26,000,000, consistent with the FY2026 House reported level, to fund section 4103 America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. This competitive grant program provides small and rural communities with the technical assistance necessary to improve water quality, operate and maintain public wastewater treatment utilities, assist with permitting, comply with federal Clean Water Act regulations and apply for federal funding under the Clean Water State Revolving Funds. Small and rural communities strive to ensure quality wastewater stays in compliance—this initiative provides them with the technical resources to do so.

Bill Language: \$26,000,000 shall be for grants under section 104(b)(8) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1254(b)(8)).

Report Language: The Agency is directed to issue awards on an annual basis to the most qualified and experienced non-profit organizations necessary to provide quality uninterrupted training and technical assistance. The Agency is directed to allocate funds to grantees within 180 days of enactment of this Act.

EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance Justification: Enact the FY2026 House reported level of \$26,000,000 for section 4103 of America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 in FY2027

EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance: This technical assistance authorization, section 4103, "Technical Assistance for Treatment Works," was included in America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, and signed into law by the President on October 23, 2018.

Small and rural communities have more difficulty affording public wastewater service due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. This challenge is compounded by the fact that rural communities have lower average median household incomes and often have higher rates of poverty. Likewise, rural communities have a much more challenging time complying with federal Clean Water Act permits and operating complex wastewater treatment systems due to the lack of technical resources and expertise in small communities. While most rural communities have fewer resources, they are regulated in the exact same manner as a large community - and often operating similarly complex treatment systems that are smaller in scale but no less sophisticated to operate and troubleshoot. Many small communities may only have one (or one part-time) operator with multiple duties (not just wastewater treatment) - while a large community may have a team of technical experts including engineers, chemists, and highly trained operators - all as part of their full-time staff.

Many small and rural communities are currently struggling to comply with the EPA sewer permits (i.e. federal National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits), experiencing issues with inflow and infiltration of their collection systems, meeting Clean Water Act ammonia standards, biochemical oxygen demand standards, new nutrient standards, stormwater regulations and changing permits due to implementation of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations.

This recent law provides direct on-site assistance to communities to support the efficient operation of their wastewater utilities and ensure compliance with all the federal regulations under the Clean Water Act. Funding and implementation will allow communities to comply with the federal Clean Water Act requirements, potentially save thousands of dollars, prevent the hiring of consultants to comply with the Clean Water Act and limit exposure to civil penalties. Instead of a "must" mandate from the federal government, this provision will provide small and rural communities with "how-to" guidance for cost-effective compliance with the federal government's Clean Water Act.

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2027 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **National Water and Wastewater Operator Apprenticeship Program**

Appropriations bill: Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: Shelley Moore Capito (WV)

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: Tammy Baldwin (WI)

House subcommittee Chairman: Robert Aderholt (AL)

House subcommittee Ranking Member: Rosa DeLauro (CT)

Department: United States Department of Labor

Agency: Employment and Training Administration

Appropriations Account: Training and Employment Services

FY2027 President's budget request: TBD

**Apprenticeship Grant
Program Funding History**

FY2021	\$185,000,000
FY2022	\$235,000,000
FY2023	\$285,000,000
FY2024	\$285,000,000
FY2026	TBD

FY2027 request: \$20,000,000 set-aside within the Apprenticeship Grant Program

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests \$20,000,000 for a national water and wastewater operator apprenticeship program to be funded by the available resources within the Apprenticeship Grant Program account.

Bill Language: \$20,000,000 shall be for national water and wastewater operator industry workforce training through apprenticeship programs registered with the Office of Apprenticeship of the Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor or a State apprenticeship agency recognized by the Office of Apprenticeship pursuant to the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the "National Apprenticeship Act"; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

Report Language: The Committee directs the Secretary to make \$20,000,000 in grant funding available for a nonprofit organization working with community water systems to establish, implement, expand, and administer registered apprenticeship programs consistent with the National Guideline Standards of Apprenticeship for Water and Wastewater System Operations Specialists to address nationwide shortages of qualified drinking water and wastewater operators, especially in rural America.

DOL Rural Water Workforce Initiative Justification: Provide the FY2026 House reported level of \$20,000,000 for a national water and wastewater operator apprenticeship program.

NRWA, State Rural Water Associations, USDA, DOL, EPA, and local rural water utilities are collaborating successfully to establish the first nationally recognized Registered Apprenticeship Program for water and wastewater system operators, while creating jobs in rural America. In July 2024, NRWA achieved a significant milestone by securing \$7,631,873 in DOL competitive grant funding to support the development and expansion of these vital rural water apprenticeships. As of January 2026, 35 State Rural Water Associations have completed the rigorous process of obtaining federally approved Registered Apprenticeship Programs and are now attracting, training, and retaining the next generation water workforce with over 687 apprentices enrolled and over 519 have completed their apprenticeship as of December 31, 2025.

To bolster this effective initiative, Congress “urged” the Secretary of Labor to make funding available for the NRWA Registered Apprenticeship Program in the FY2024 Further Consolidated Appropriations Act and the FY2026 DOL House Appropriations report includes a set-aside directing the Secretary of Labor to invest \$20 million:

The Committee directs DOL to make \$20,000,000 in grant funding available to establish, implement, expand, and administer registered apprenticeship programs consistent with the National Guideline Standards of Apprenticeship for Water and Wastewater System Operations Specialists to address nationwide shortages of qualified drinking water and wastewater operators, especially in rural America (page 18)

To continue the growing, successful NRWA Apprenticeship Program, we also request a \$285 million funding level for the Apprenticeship Grant Program account, the same as the House and Senate’s FY2026 reported level with a \$20,000,000 set-aside for a national water and wastewater operator apprenticeship program to be funded by the available resources within that account.

Safe and effective water utility management is vital to rural America and the nation. There are currently over 50,000 community water supplies in the country, 91% serve populations of 10,000 or less. Employment data indicates up to 50% of this workforce will leave the water industry within the next 10 years. A vast majority of community water systems have been unable to attract, train and retain the next generation workforce due to the lack of an identifiable career path coupled with low salary levels and population density. Rural water utilities need a pipeline of skilled workers to ensure clean and safe water for the public and to maintain the water infrastructure necessary to keep service areas economically viable. These operators serve as public health officials and are often the only person responsible for complying with all the applicable federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act regulations and for supplying the small community with safe drinking water and sanitation every second of every day. Water and wastewater systems will be empowered to leverage workforce development activities including an identifiable career path and a modern, systematic apprenticeship model with this funding for the first time.

DISTRICT 5

Legend:
Blue - Waterworks Assistance
Green - Energy Efficiency
Teal/Aqua – Source Water Assistance
Light Brown – Wastewater Assistance

Contact Date	System Name	System Contact	Position	System Connections	Total Contact Time	Savings to System
1/15/25	East Troy Waterworks	Mike Mengel	Wastewater Ops. Specialist	1008 W / 1008 WW	2.25 hrs.	\$1,000
WRWA Wastewater Trainer/Technician Jesse Hass was contacted by Mike Mengel regarding ammonia testing procedures and quality control. East Troy was using the probe method to test ammonia levels in their samples. Mr. Mengel had purchased a new Genesys spectrophotometer. He had heard that the Test n' Tube method was more efficient for the laboratory and wanted to information on switching procedures. Mr. Hass dropped by to discuss the procedure for ammonia analysis using the spectrophotometer. Mr. Hass informed Mr. Mengel that he would be willing to provide an SOP, bench sheets, and a walkthrough on how to set up an ammonia curve. After discussing the ammonia testing procedure, they agreed the lab would need to order some new standards to run an ammonia curve and order the tubes for the procedure. Mr. Hass said he would stop again soon to walkthrough the testing procedure and help set up the curve if they switch to the Test n' Tube method full time. Mr. Hass also offered to find a lab that runs Test n' Tube method and would set up a day for the East Troy facility to observe the method in another lab. WRWA saved the system \$1,000 for consulting fees, training and not having to buy a new probe.						
2/6/25	Jefferson Waterworks	Mike Meske	Water Superintendent	1930 W / 1930 WW	1.5 hrs.	\$1,275
Mike Meske contacted WRWA Circuit Rider Annetta Von Rueden for assistance in navigating through the WI DNR hydro static permit. When Annetta arrived, she showed Mr. Meske the proper sampling procedures to follow for hydrant flushing water discharge and well rehabilitation discharge water. Annetta demonstrated to Mr. Meske where in the permit the specific parameters were that needed to be tested and sampled prior to discharge. Mr. Meske had well rehabilitation schedule, a perfect opportunity for sampling these parameters according to the DNR permit. Now that Mr. Meske knew which parameters to sample (phosphorus, total chlorine, and number of gallons flushed), he could continue with the well rehabilitation and stay in compliance with the DNR hydro static permit. WRWA's technical assistance saved the City of Jefferson \$1,275 in engineering fees and consulting.						
5/22/25	Waterloo Waterworks	Nick Hauptli	Wastewater Ops. Specialist	885 W / 885 WW	4.25 hrs.	\$1,000
WRWA Wastewater/Trainer Technician Jesse Hass and WRWA EPA Wastewater Technician Brooke Klingbeil were contacted by Waterloo Director of Public Works Mike Kitelinger to help set up a new DR3900 spectrophotometer. Jesse and Brooke discussed with Mr. Kitelinger and Mr. Hauptli how to set up the machine and the necessary paperwork. After researching the Standard Operating Procedures, Jesse and Brooke helped set up standards for a new phosphorus curve. Mr. Kitelinger and Mr. Hauptli analyzed the standards, and all the data was put into a spreadsheet to see if the curve met the criteria to be used. Jesse and Brooke confirmed the data was sufficient. A week later, Mr. Kitelinger advised the village had failed its annual proficiency test on their old spectrophotometer. Brooke and Jesse scheduled another stop and told Mr. Kitelinger to purchase a practice test. Brooke and Jesse went over the phosphorus test on both spectrophotometers. After reviewing procedures and discussing a few more quality-control checks, the village was able to get positive results on the practice test. The village will use their new spectrophotometer on their next proficiency test. WRWA's assistance saved the village \$1,000 in training and consultant fees associated with setting up the device.						

Renee Koback

From: Sara Bach <sarab@nlslab.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2025 8:38 AM
To: Renee Koback
Subject: WRWA Annual Technical Conference Booth Selection

To all the WRWA staff-

I want to thank you for making the booth selection process yesterday go so smoothly.

All of the information you provided leading up to the meeting set us up to be ready to make our selection. It was very helpful that you were filling in the booth map along with putting the booth selections in the Teams chat. It was also clear that there was a plan for technology challenges.

We appreciate all the hard work that the WRWA staff puts into planning and executing all WRWA events.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Green Bay and experiencing the new venue.

Sara Bach
Client Service Representative



Northern Lake Service Inc.

sarab@nlslab.com | www.nlslab.com
O: 715-478-6069 D: 262-547-3406
2420 N Grandview Blvd, Waukesha WI 53188

Like us on Facebook @northernlakeservice



Renee Koback

From: James Nickel <jcpnickel@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 9:42 AM
To: Kelly Thomas
Cc: Renee Koback
Subject: Thank you Kelly

Kelly, thank you for taking the time on May 19th to meet up with me to discuss and advise on updating our system emergency response plan. As a relatively new operator and administrator for our system of 80 homes, I have been navigating the different state requirements and updating forms over the past year. All of it is new to me. I appreciate the clarification and direction you were able to offer in coming up with a viable, real-world solution to fit our system needs and meet the state requirements.

I also appreciate the info you shared regarding companies and contractors to consider for working on the system when needs arise. Thank you for making yourself available. You and the WRWA are a great resource and I'm sure I will be calling on you in the future!

Jim Nickel
Operator/Trustee
Sunnyfield Acres Water Association
Oconomowoc



Techniplas

Destination: next level

Techniplas
N44W33341 Watertown Plank Road
Nashotah, WI 53089

August 6th, 2025

Wisconsin Rural Water Association
350 Water Way
Plover, WI 54467

Subject: Letter of Appreciation for WRWA Training Services

Dear Wisconsin Rural Water Association Team,

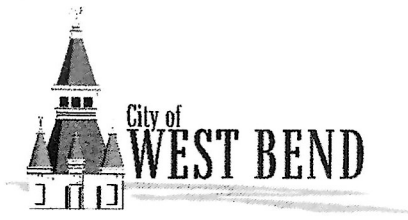
I am writing to extend my sincere appreciation for the outstanding training services provided through your program. Most especially, to commend Kelly Thomas for the exceptional experience I had during my recent training. Kelly's professionalism, knowledge, and dedication were clearly evident throughout the training.

Throughout our time preparing, Kelly consistently demonstrated flexibility, even accommodating sessions on shorter notices when needed. Kelly was prepared to answer any question I threw at him during the training session, and he always knew the best response. Moreover, Kelly's personable nature made the learning session genuinely enjoyable. He created a welcoming and engaging learning environment that encouraged my curiosity and involvement. Leaving our exam training session, I felt well-informed and prepared, which significantly boosted my confidence.

What stood out most was Kelly's ability to break down complex systems using relatable analogies was incredibly helpful, especially since I came into the training with almost no prior knowledge on water systems. Thanks to his thorough teaching styles, I was not only able to grasp the material but also passed the exam on my first attempt! His depth of knowledge and passion for the industry truly shone through the lesson. It was clear that Kelly doesn't just do his job, he enjoys it, and that passion makes a significant difference for learners like myself.

I want to offer a huge thank you to the Wisconsin Rural Water Association for establishing and maintaining such a valuable program. It's efforts like these that open doors for individuals to grow professionally and help ensure the continued excellence of water systems in Wisconsin. I feel privileged and extremely appreciative to have been a part of it.

Warm regards,
Mackenzie Leibiger
Mackenzie.Leibiger@Techniplas.com
EHS Coordinator



WATER UTILITY

Thank You from the City of West Bend Water Utility

Dear Wisconsin Rural Water Association,

On behalf of the City of West Bend Water Utility, I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation for everything you do each year to support and strengthen the water industry. The guidance, training, and conferences you provide hold tremendous value and create lasting, career-long impacts for our operators.

Our deepest thanks go to the dedicated employees of WRWA whose hard work ensures that Wisconsin's water professionals remain informed, prepared, and confident. Your commitment to keeping the industry current and resilient does not go unnoticed.

We are especially grateful for the high-quality classes and educational opportunities you offer. Whether introducing operators to new technologies or refreshing their knowledge of existing systems, your team consistently delivers clear, relevant, and expert instruction. Because of your efforts, our operators remain sharp, motivated, and equipped to serve our community with excellence.

Quite simply, without the expertise, passion, and support provided by WRWA, our utility would face significant challenges in maintaining the same level of readiness and professional growth. Your organization plays a critical role in our success, and for that, we are truly thankful.

Again, thank you to all of the WRWA staff for your knowledge, dedication, and continued willingness to help whenever needed. Your organization is both essential and greatly appreciated.

With sincere gratitude,

City of West Bend Water Utility

Renee Koback

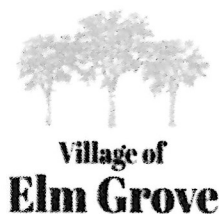
From: Kelly Thomas
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 4:38 PM
To: Renee Koback
Subject: FW: lead and copper

Kelly C. Thomas

Mr. Kelly C. Thomas
Technical Assistance Director
Wisconsin Rural Water Association
(715) 204-0488
www.wrwa.org

From: Brian Naylor <bnaylor@elmgroviewi.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 9:44 AM
To: Kelly Thomas <KThomas@wrwa.org>
Subject: lead and copper

Kelly,
Thanks for the help with the lead and copper posting requirements.
We are good to go.
Have a good holiday
Brian



Brian Naylor
Maintenance Supervisor
Village Of Elm Grove

[262-782-6700](tel:262-782-6700) | bnaylor@elmgroviewi.org
[13600 Juneau Blvd. Elm Grove, WI 53122](https://www.elmgroviewi.org/13600-Juneau-Blvd-Elm-Grove-WI-53122)

*This electronic transmission, including any files attached thereto, may contain confidential information that is legally privileged, confidential, and exempt from disclosure. The information is intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, dissemination, copying, distribution, or the taking of any action in reliance on the contents of this confidential information is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please destroy it and immediately notify Brian Naylor at bnaylor@elmgroviewi.org * **Elm Grove Elected Officials and Members of Village Committees, Boards and Commissions: In order to comply with the Open Meetings Act requirements, please limit any reply to only the sender of this electronic communication.***