

On March 31, President Biden released his \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan to improve the nation's infrastructure. The White House press release and fact sheet said: "The United States of America is the wealthiest country in the world, yet we rank 13th when it comes to the overall quality of our infrastructure. After decades of disinvestment, our roads, bridges, and water systems are crumbling." The plan calls on Congress "...to invest an additional \$17B in inland waterways, coastal ports, land ports of entry, and ferries, which are all essential to our nation's freight." The plan includes investments in rural and tribal communities.

President Biden's plan invests \$111 billion to: (1) replace 100% of the nation's lead pipes and service lines – with \$45 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) and Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN) grants; and (2) upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems. It will tackle new contaminants, support clean water infrastructure across rural America, and scale up existing successful programs, with \$56 billion in grants and low-cost flexible loans to states, tribes, territories, and disadvantaged communities across the country. Another \$10 billion is for monitoring and remediating PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in drinking water and to invest in rural small water systems and household well and wastewater systems, including drainage fields.

The plan addresses concerns with infrastructure affected by natural disasters. "In 2020, the United States endured 22 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters, costing \$95 billion in damages to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. In Louisiana, Hurricane Laura caused \$19 billion of damage, resulting in broken water systems and a severely damaged electrical grid that impeded a quick recovery. Building back better requires that the investments in this historic plan make our infrastructure more resilient in the face of increasingly severe floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and other risks."

The plan includes funds to help with water and lands impacted by abandoned mines. "Hundreds of thousands of former orphan oil and gas wells and abandoned mines pose serious safety hazards, while also causing ongoing air, water, and other environmental damage. Many of these old wells and mines are located in rural communities that have suffered from years of disinvestment." The plan includes \$16 billion toward jobs "plugging oil and gas wells and restoring and reclaiming abandoned coal, hardrock, and uranium mines."

The plan also includes building and protecting various forms of infrastructure to improve water resource resilience.. "President Biden's plan will protect and, where necessary, restore nature-based infrastructure - our lands, forests, wetlands, watersheds, and coastal and ocean resources. Families and businesses throughout the United States rely on this infrastructure for their lives and livelihoods. President Biden is calling on Congress to invest in protection from extreme wildfires, coastal resilience to sea-level rise and hurricanes, support for agricultural resources management and climate-smart technologies, and the protection and restoration of major land and water.... Additionally, the President's plan provides funding for the western drought crisis by investing in water efficiency and recycling programs, Tribal Water Settlements, and dam safety. President Biden's plan will empower local leaders to shape these restoration and resilience project funds in line with the Outdoor Restoration Force Act." <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/>

Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) introduced the Outdoor Restoration Force Act (S. 5015) at the end of the 116th Congress. It has not yet been reintroduced, but Bennet said: "I'm especially pleased the president's plan includes my outdoor restoration bill, which will create jobs by supporting locally-led forest health and watershed restoration projects. This legislation was written in partnership with Coloradans. Just like our roads and bridges, our natural infrastructure is vital to our economy in Colorado and across the West." The former bill would have created a fund for collaborative restoration and resilience projects that address wildfires, natural disasters, and abandoned mines. <https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2021/3/bennet-welcomes-biden-s-american-jobs-plan-applauds-inclusion-of-his-outdoor-restoration-proposal>