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# WestFAST News

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$5.8 Billion from President Biden’s Investing in America agenda for Drinking Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Infrastructure Upgrades**

*Unprecedented \$21.9 billion from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is transforming communities across the nation.*

EPA February 20, 2024

Today, Feb. 20, 2024, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as part of the fourth Investing in America tour, Vice President Kamala Harris and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael S. Regan will announce over \$5.8 billion from President Biden’s Investing in America agenda for states, Tribes, and territories to invest in drinking water and clean water infrastructure upgrades. The funding is part of the over \$50 billion investment in water infrastructure upgrades from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – the largest such investment in American history. Today’s announcement will support essential water infrastructure that protects public health and treasured water bodies across the nation. Almost half of this funding will be available as grants or principal forgiveness loans, ensuring funds reach underserved communities most in need of investments in water infrastructure.

“President Biden and I believe that every person in our country should have a right to clean water no matter where they live or how much money they make. That is why our Administration made clean water a national priority and delivered the largest investment in America’s water infrastructure in history,” said Vice President Harris. “Today, I am proud to announce more than \$5.8 billion from our Investing in America agenda for states, Tribes, and territories to upgrade water infrastructure in communities across our nation. With this investment, we are continuing our urgent work to remove every lead pipe in the country and ensure that every American has access to safe and reliable drinking water.”

“President Biden’s Investing in America agenda continues to transform communities for the better with this latest infusion of funds for critical water infrastructure projects,” said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. “With \$50 billion in total, the largest investment in water infrastructure in our nation’s history, EPA will enable communities across the nation to ensure safer drinking water for their residents and rebuild vital clean water infrastructure to protect public health for decades to come.”

“Across our Commonwealth, too many communities are struggling to fix leaking pipes and aging infrastructure that stand in the way of bringing clean water to Pennsylvania families,” said Governor Josh Shapiro. “With this funding from the Biden Administration, we will be able to continue making critical investments in our infrastructure in order to build a better future for our

communities. Together, we can ensure access to clean water and uphold Pennsylvanians' Constitutional right to clean air, pure water, and a healthy environment." <sup>1</sup>

"Our state constitution affords the right to safe, pure water to every Pennsylvanian," said U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA). "Thanks to the infrastructure law, we're protecting people and the environment from water contamination, and ensuring the availability of clean, safe drinking water for homes and businesses." <sup>2</sup>

"Upwards of 37 public schools in Western Pennsylvania have lead contamination in their water. I came to Congress to represent the Black, brown, and poor communities that have been deemed as "sacrifice zones" for polluters. Generations of folks in communities like mine have grown up in and are now raising children in zip codes that have water funneled through lead pipes next to rivers and streams too polluted to swim in. That's why earlier this year, we secured \$84.5 million to remove lead water lines, and are continuing to fight for environmental justice" said Rep. Summer Lee (PA-12). "I'm proud to work with the Biden Administration to bring home an additional \$99 million for clean water and \$75 million for clean drinking water from the Environmental Protection Agency to Pennsylvania—which will mean less kids getting sick and more families having the security of knowing their environment isn't posing an imminent threat to their health."

"Exposure to any level of lead puts everyone, especially kids, at risk," said Rep. Chris Deluzio (PA-17). "I am so glad President Biden's Infrastructure Law is investing directly in communities in Western Pennsylvania to remove dangerous lead pipes and ensure folks have clean and safe drinking water."

Communities across the country are facing water infrastructure challenges. Many cities and towns have aging water infrastructure – old, broken or lead pipes carrying drinking water and wastewater treatment plants in need of major upgrades. Some communities struggle to maintain adequate stormwater infrastructure to effectively manage flood impacts from climate change and others need

to upgrade their water treatment to address emerging contaminants like PFAS.

EPA is announcing a \$5.8 billion investment through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF), one of EPA's signature water investment programs. This multi-billion-dollar investment will fund state-run, low-interest loan programs to address key challenges, with \$2.6 billion going to the Clean Water SRF for wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and \$3.2 billion going to the Drinking Water SRF for drinking water infrastructure. Today's announcement includes allotments for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law General Supplemental funds and Emerging Contaminant funds for SRF programs for fiscal year 2024. EPA anticipates announcing allocations for billions of dollars in additional resources for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Lead Service Line Replacement fund later this spring.

### **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in Action**

Since 2022, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has injected \$21.9 billion into water infrastructure projects across the country protecting public health, preserving water resources, and creating jobs. To view stories about how the unprecedented investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are transforming communities across the country, visit EPA's new [Investing in America's Water Infrastructure Storymap](#). To read more about some additional projects that are underway, see EPA's recently released [Quarterly Report on Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funded Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF projects](#).

In the greater Pittsburgh area, water utilities are working hard to remove lead service lines from operation and reduce exposure to lead from drinking water. The Wilkesburg-Penn Joint Water Authority used \$9.5 million from the FY23 State Revolving Fund to replace approximately 1,000 lead service lines in low-income residential neighborhoods.

The [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) dedicates more than \$15 billion to replacing lead service lines. Through the [Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan](#) and [Get the Lead Out Partnership](#), the Biden-Harris Administration has made accelerating the removal of lead service lines a top priority, with a

goal of replacing 100% of lead service lines, a key element under the proposed [Lead and Copper Rule Improvements](#). The DWSRF general supplemental funding announced today may be used to achieve this goal. In addition, in the coming months, EPA will allocate additional resources exclusively for lead pipe removal and replacement through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Lead Service Line Replacement fund.

## Background

The Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and the Clean Water State Revolving Funds have been the foundation of water infrastructure investments for more than 30 years, providing low-cost financing for local projects across America. SRF programs are critically important programs for investing in the nation's water infrastructure. They are designed to generate significant and sustainable water quality and public health benefits across the country. Their impact is amplified by the growth inherent in a revolving loan structure – payment of principal and interest on loans made are available to address future needs.

For more information, including state-by-state allocation of 2023 funding, and a breakdown of EPA State Revolving Fund funding available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, please visit the [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund website](#) and the [Clean Water State Revolving Fund website](#).

## USGS Provides Easy Access to Colorado River Science with New Online Portal

*All users of the Colorado River now have a more efficient way to find U.S. Geological Survey science critical to its future management.*

USGS February 26, 2024

The [Colorado River Basin Science Collaboration Portal](#) evolved from the need by partners for better access to the wide range of USGS science produced across the basin.

“The new USGS Colorado River Basin Science Portal provides a forum for presenting, discussing, integrating and disseminating science with users of USGS and partner data,” said Katharine Dahm, Deputy Regional Director, USGS Rocky Mountain Region. “Through improved access to integrated data, we can deepen understanding and continue collaborative stewardship of the Colorado River system amid mounting water challenges.”

Since 2000, the Colorado River Basin has been experiencing a historic, extended drought that has not only impacted the river, snowpack and groundwater supplies, but also forest health, habitat and fire risk. It is the worst drought in the region in recorded history, with an estimated \$28 billion in damages to agricultural products alone.

The portal is part of a new integrated science effort that brings together expertise and regional data sets to deliver actionable information that supports decision making related to drought impacts in the Colorado River Basin. USGS experts continue to work with federal, state, Tribal and local stakeholders to improve delivery of actionable science that will help manage, adapt to and mitigate for long-term drought impacts and future challenges in the basin.

“Colorado River Basin needs and issues continue to evolve as does science, technology and the ability to collaborate with all parties interested in this critical waterway,” said Dahm.

Preliminary content included in the initial release of the Colorado River Basin Science Portal is designed to facilitate discussions about the current science and future science needs.



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## **Biden-Harris Administration Announces Over \$770 Million for Rural Infrastructure Projects During Investing in America Tour**

*Funding Will Bring High-Speed Internet, Clean  
Drinking Water and Modern Infrastructure to More  
Than One Million People in Rural Communities*

USDA February 21, 2024

During a visit to Edgecombe County, N.C., a Rural Partners Network community, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack and White House Domestic Policy Advisor Neera Tanden today announced that USDA is funding 216 projects in 45 states, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands to bring high-speed internet, clean water, state-of-the-art infrastructure and economic

growth to rural communities as part of President Biden's *Investing in America* agenda.

The new projects, totaling \$772.6 million in investments, will benefit more than 1 million people living in remote areas of the country by providing reliable high-speed internet access, clean, safe water and a range of support for rural families, agricultural producers and small businesses.

Secretary Vilsack and Neera Tanden announced the awards during the Rural Prosperity town hall at Edgecombe Community College as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's fourth *Investing in America* tour. Many of the projects announced today were made possible through historic investments from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. Today's announcement comes just months after USDA announced a [Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant](#) to equip 10 telemedicine stations throughout Edgecombe County.

"President Biden's *Investing in America* agenda is transforming our country for the better – reaching communities in every corner of the United States, including those that have too often been left behind," Secretary Vilsack said. "The investments I'm announcing today will help us build our economy from the middle out and bottom up by bringing high-speed internet, clean water, modern infrastructure and good-paying jobs to communities in rural areas, in turn making it more possible for young people to build a good life in the communities they love, and for more Americans to find new opportunity in rural communities."

### **High-Speed Internet Awards**

USDA is investing in \$51.7 million to expand access to high-speed internet for people in rural areas across the country through the Reconnect Program and the Broadband Technical Assistance Program.

Under the [Broadband Technical Assistance Program](#), [USDA is providing \\$9.7 million](#) to help 24 organizations deliver or receive technical assistance to expand high-speed internet access for people in rural and Tribal communities across 17 states. This funding will also develop and expand broadband cooperatives in rural areas.

This program is made possible by President Biden's historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provides \$65 billion to expand reliable, affordable, high-speed internet to all communities across the U.S.

Awards will benefit people living in Alaska, California, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming.

For example:

- In the Midwest, Merit Network Inc. is receiving \$997,000 to develop a connectivity and digital equity strategy to promote the expansion of high-speed internet in eight communities across Muskegon, Roscommon, Van Buren, Ogemaw and Saginaw counties in Michigan.
- In the South, HarvestBeam Inc. is receiving a \$199,000 award to promote the expansion of high-speed internet in 13 communities across Pitt, Lenoir, Craven, Greene, Beaufort, Washington and Jones counties in North Carolina.

USDA is also providing \$42 million in grants through the [ReConnect Program](#) to bring high-speed internet to rural, remote and underserved communities in Florida.

For example:

- The Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative Inc. is receiving a \$17.8 million ReConnect Program grant to benefit 19,000 people, 480 businesses, 650 farms and 42 educational facilities in Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee counties.
- IBT Group USA LLC is receiving a \$24.2 million ReConnect Program grant to benefit more than 8,600 people, 230 businesses, 11 farms and 34 educational facilities in DeSoto County. IBT Group USA LLC will also make high-speed internet affordable by participating in the Federal Communications Commission's Lifeline Program and Affordable Connectivity Program.

Since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA has invested \$3.7 billion in 338 ReConnect projects, financed in part by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, that will bring high-speed internet access to more than 485,000 people in the hardest to reach communities of rural America.

### **ReConnect Program Round 5**

In addition to today's high-speed internet investments, Secretary Vilsack also announced that USDA will begin accepting applications on March 22, 2024 for its fifth round of funding for the [ReConnect Program](#) to connect millions of people in rural America to affordable high-speed internet.

In order to continue connecting rural families, business owners and agricultural producers to reliable, affordable high-speed internet, USDA is making several program improvements under Round 5. This will further increase the availability of funding in rural areas where residents and businesses lack access to affordable, high-speed internet.

For a full list of program improvements, and program and application requirements, visit [www.usda.gov/reconnect](http://www.usda.gov/reconnect) or see page 13036 of the Feb. 21, 2024, [Federal Register](#).

### **Rural Partners Network Awards**

USDA is funding a variety of projects in underserved communities participating in the [Rural Partners Network](#) (RPN), including some made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act. These investments will expand access to jobs, business opportunities, quality health care, clean water and renewable energy.

About \$76.6 million of the funding announced today will support 32 projects in Alaska, Georgia, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, West Virginia and Wisconsin. These projects will benefit small towns and cities, family farms and small businesses in RPN communities and neighboring communities in Tennessee.

For example:

- In North Carolina, Northampton County will use a \$5 million [Community Facilities Grant](#) to build a 15,000-square-foot addition to the courthouse to provide critical services to residents and businesses. The new facility will house offices for the county manager, taxes, register of deeds, finance, human resources and information technology.
- In Wayne County, West Virginia, Brunetti's Italian Bakery will use a \$150,000 [Rural Energy for America Program](#) grant to buy and install a 167-kilowatt array that will save the business nearly \$14,000 a year in energy costs.

Since RPN's launch in April 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration has provided approximately \$2.6 billion to carry out a variety of economic development projects in RPN communities across 10 states and Puerto Rico. Federal agencies partnering with USDA have also provided more than \$80 million to RPN communities during that same period.

### **Rural Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure**

Today, USDA is also awarding \$644.2 million to help 158 rural utilities provide clean drinking water and sanitary wastewater systems for 913,000 people in rural areas. This funding builds on the [\\$5.8 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for clean water from the Environmental Protection Agency that Vice President Harris announced yesterday in Pittsburgh](#).

The Department is making investments through the [Solid Waste Management Grants Program](#) to help organizations provide technical assistance and training for rural communities and utilities to improve solid waste facilities. The assistance helps communities protect their local watersheds and the health of people living in rural areas.

USDA is also financing projects through the [Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program](#) to help state and local governments, private nonprofits and federally recognized Tribes build and improve rural wastewater systems. The funding enables rural communities to expand access to clean and reliable drinking water, sanitary waste disposal and stormwater drainage.

For example:

- In the Northeast, the town of Hancock, Maryland, will use funding to rehabilitate and upgrade its wastewater treatment system, protect the health of approximately 1,500 people and safeguard the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.
- In the Midwest, Regional Water will use funding to protect the health of 521 rural residents by building 12.25 miles of rural potable water piping infrastructure to two housing developments under construction in rural Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

These water infrastructure projects will benefit families and businesses in Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands.

A [full list of projects](#) from today's announcement is available online.

USDA's most recent [Rural America at a Glance](#) report, published in November 2023, signals that the Biden-Harris Administration's investments in rural American infrastructure, jobs and overall recovery are working. Specifically, the report found that the rural population is growing after a decade of overall population loss, with growth of approximately a quarter percent from 2020 to 2022. It also showed that rural employment levels and annual growth rates have nearly returned to those seen in the years prior to the pandemic. In particular, the emergence of the clean energy economy is a growing employment sector, with clean energy jobs employing more than 243,000 workers in nonmetropolitan counties in 2021, and those jobs have continued to grow through the Biden-Harris Administration's investments since. The rural population is also experiencing a decline in poverty. In 2021, 9.7 percent fewer nonmetropolitan counties experienced persistent poverty (county-level poverty rates of 20 percent or

higher over the last 30 years) compared with a decade earlier.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, tribal and high-poverty areas. Visit the [Rural Data Gateway](#) to learn how and where these investments are impacting rural America.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate-smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

## Upcoming Meetings and Webinars

[2024 WSWC Spring \(203rd\) Meetings and Washington Roundtable](#)

March 13 & 14, Washington DC

## Other Federal News

[BLM 2/8/24. BLM announces \\$41 million investment from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for ecosystem restoration](#)

[DOE 2/2/24. Biden-Harris Administration Announces Nearly \\$72 Million in Largest Single](#)

[Investment to Support America's Hydropower Facilities](#)

[DOE 2/13/24. Biden- Harris Administration Invests \\$60 Million to Expand Clean, Renewable Geothermal Energy](#)

[DOE 2/28/24. DOE Announces Funding for Tribal Clean Energy Projects](#)

[DOI 2/14/24. Interior Department Reaches Landmark Agreement with Klamath Basin Tribes, Project Irrigators to Collaborate on Ecosystem Restoration and Water Reliability](#)

[DOI 2/16/24. Biden-Harris Administration Announces \\$10 Million from President's Investing in America Agenda for Tribal Irrigation and Power Projects](#)

[DOI 2/22/24. Biden-Harris Administration Announces \\$50 Million from Investing in America Agenda to Clean Up Legacy Pollution on Federal Lands and Waters](#)

[DOI 2/23/24. Interior Department Releases Draft Guidance for States to Access up to \\$1.5 Billion from President Biden's Investing in America Agenda to Address Legacy Pollution](#)

[EPA 2/1/24. Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Steps to Protect Communities from PFAS and Other Emerging Chemicals of Concern](#)

[EPA 2/13/24. Biden-Harris Administration expands EPA program to bring wastewater services to 150 more underserved communities across rural America as part of Investing in America agenda](#)

[EPA 2/22/24. EPA expands its water technical assistance program to help more communities access historic federal infrastructure funding](#)

[FWS 2/1/24. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Proposals to Update Framework for Biological Integrity, Diversity and Environmental Health of the National Wildlife Refuge System](#)

[FWS 2/14/24. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Nearly \\$70 Million for Klamath Basin Restoration Projects as Part of the President's Investing in America Agenda](#)

NOAA 2/22/24. Climate Change Efforts Forge Ahead Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act

Reclamation 2/21/24. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation: A Joint Commitment to the Nation's Water Infrastructure

USACE 2/12/24. Army Corps of Engineers publishes proposed rule on protection of historic properties

USDA 2/5/24. USDA Celebrates 10 Years of Climate Hubs as Biden-Harris Administration Leads Historic Climate Agenda

USDA 2/20/24. Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$500 Million to Confront the Wildfire Crisis as Part of Investing in America Agenda

USGS 2/8/24. New Study Demonstrates How Climate and Irrigation Influence Salinity of Waters in the Upper Colorado River Basin

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 16 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council (WSWC), and the Western Governors Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.