Oregon gets $28.5 million in stimulus funds for water infrastructure projects

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. -- In a move that stands to create jobs, boost local economies, improve aging water infrastructure and protect human health and the environment for the people in the State of Oregon, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded over $28,515,000 to the Oregon Department of Human Servicesâ€™ Drinking Water Program.

This new infusion of money will help the state and local governments finance many of the overdue improvements to water projects that are essential to protecting public health and the environment across the state.

According to Michelle Pirzadeh, EPAâ€™s acting Regional Administrator in Seattle, the funds provided by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 will go to the state's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program.

â€œThis is great news for Oregon families and the environment,â€• said EPAâ€™s Pirzadeh. â€œEveryone agrees that safe, clean drinking water is a fundamental building-block for healthy communities and local economies. The Oregon Department of Human Services will use twenty percent of the $28.5 million for water conservation and other innovative projects. This stimulus grant makes an important down payment on fixing our aging drinking water infrastructure and will also offer workers more well-paid, 'green' jobs.â€œ

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program provides low-interest loans and â€œprincipal forgivenessâ€• for drinking water systems to finance infrastructure improvements. The program also emphasizes providing funds to small and disadvantaged communities and to programs that encourage pollution prevention as a tool for ensuring safe drinking water. An unprecedented $2 billion dollars will be awarded to fund drinking water infrastructure projects across the country under the Recovery Act in the form of low-interest loans, principal forgiveness and grants. At least 20% of the funds provided under the Recovery Act are to be used for green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency improvements and other environmentally innovative projects.

Since the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program began in 1997, EPA has awarded more than $8 billion in grants, which states have turned into $15 billion of financial assistance to fund drinking water projects. The revolving nature of the program ensures drinking water projects will be funded for generations to come.

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 on February 17, 2009.

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