



2017-18 Budget Update - Clean Water Infrastructure



One of the areas I was very pleased with in the 2017-18 state budget is continued investment in our clean water infrastructure throughout New York State. As you may recall, it was only two years ago my colleague in the Assembly and former Mayor Steve Otis (Rye) and I approached then newly minted Speaker Carl Heastie with the idea of using some of the state settlement funds to establish a first of its kind state grant program for our ailing infrastructure. Speaker Heastie carried this ball across the goal line for a \$100 million investment in year one. The Governor included this program into his budget last year, swelling the overall investment to \$475 million over three years.

The 2017-18 budget builds on this prior effort in a large way in the provision of \$2.5 billion for water infrastructure to help ensure clean drinking water by repairing and replacing old pipes and water mains, as well as preventive measures, such as source water land acquisition, to keep water from becoming polluted. The budget also provides \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund, with dedicated funding for environmental justice programs to help low-income communities impacted by pollution. This investment is long overdue and I am glad to see these efforts becoming a reality.

Here are some additional details in case you are interested:

Investing in clean water

The funding for water infrastructure, which is a \$500 million increase over the executive's original proposal, includes:

- \$1 billion for the 2015 Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to help municipalities upgrade their drinking and wastewater infrastructure;
- \$350 million for clean water infrastructure projects after 2021;
- \$245 million for water quality improvement projects;
- \$150 million for inter-municipal water infrastructure grants;
- \$130 million for drinking water remediation and mitigation of contaminated drinking water;
- \$110 million for land acquisition projects for source water protection;
- \$100 million for municipal water quality infrastructure programs;
- \$75 million for upgrades and replacements of septic systems and cesspools;
- \$50 million for green infrastructure projects;
- \$50 million for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs);
- \$20 million for the replacement of lead drinking water service lines;
- \$10 million for a water infrastructure emergency loan fund; and
- \$10 million for IT system upgrades related to mapping technologies.

Clean water is absolutely essential to our health and safety. New York is full of communities that have outdated water infrastructure. We've seen way too many water main breaks and drinking water contamination incidents that threaten the health of our families. It's important that we make robust investments in replacing old pipes and water mains. Yes, let's Fix Our Pipes!

As you may know, the Assembly has been at the forefront in the push for significant investments in water infrastructure, continuously calling attention to the importance of safe, clean drinking water. The budget also establishes a drinking water quality council within the Department of Health to make recommendations on issues surrounding water contamination and testing with input from stakeholders and the public. Further, it implements an Emerging Contaminant Monitoring program to identify emerging contaminants in public water systems, as well as establish testing and notification requirements. Mitigation and remediation of contaminated drinking water supplies would also be available.

From Hoosick Falls to Newburgh to Long Island, recent crises have shown that we need to do more to keep our drinking water clean before it is too late. The program would ensure drinking water is tested for known contaminants like perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), as well as emerging contaminants, on a regular basis and that the necessary steps are taken to keep residents safe. This was another issue that came up in the hearings we had this past fall and I am glad to see that action is being taken instead of finger pointing as the public

deserves better.

Continued Growth of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

The final budget's \$300 million investment in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) reflects our continued commitment to protecting our environment, with increased attention on environmental justice by addressing inequities caused by environmental damage to poor and disadvantaged communities. As one who represents urban areas, such as the South End of Albany, this is a very high priority of mine and I was glad to see \$500,000 of last year's EPF allocated to help address air quality concerns in the Ezra Prentice/Port of Albany area and with this year's budget and investment in EPF we have greater investment.

We can't turn a blind eye to the damage that's been inflicted on our most vulnerable communities especially as we are just beginning to understand the long-term effects unfair project siting has on low-income communities and the effect it has on the future of our children."

To that end, the final budget includes:

- \$8 million for environmental justice programs – an increase of \$1 million over the executive budget; and
- \$500,000 for green jobs and renewable energy training in environmental justice communities.

It also increases the state match for local waterfront revitalization programs from 50 percent to 85 percent for environmental justice communities which will make projects that much more attainable.

The EPF investment also includes:

- \$36.3 million for land acquisition – an increase of \$3.3 million over the executive budget; and
- \$13 million for invasive species – an increase of \$1 million over the executive budget.

Overall this was another good budget for our environment, both above and below ground. That being said, we have over \$80 billion of work to do and that is not lost on me or my colleagues. However we are moving in the right direction!
