

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

Water Infrastructure Project Outreach Toolkit

Background:

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill signed into law March 11. It provides \$350 billion dollars in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to remedy this mismatch between rising costs and falling revenues. This includes:

- \$195 billion for states, (a minimum of \$500 million for each State);
- \$130 billion for local governments (a minimum of \$1.25 billion per state is provided by the statute inclusive of the amounts allocated to local governments within the state);
- \$20 billion for tribal governments; and
- \$4.5 billion for territories

More details:

- This funding can be utilized to invest in infrastructure, including water, sewer, and broadband services.
- Half of the funding will be sent out in 2021 and half 18 months after the first payment
- Drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure are all allowable uses of this funding --> any project that could be funded with a Clean Water State Revolving Fund or a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund is eligible
- Funding must be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026

Municipal leaders are beginning to discuss the use of American Rescue Plan funds. This is an opportunity for Coalition member organizations to urge state and local governments to prioritize investing in water infrastructure projects to meet the demands for safe, accessible water and sewer services in the face of the climate crisis.

The Treasury's Interim Final Rule aligns types of eligible projects with the wide range of projects that can be supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#) (SRF) and [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#). There are 11 project categories under the Clean Water SRF and six under the Drinking Water SRF, including planning and design for capital projects and water quality planning likely to result in a capital project. [Click here](#) for more information and FAQs.

New Jersey Info:

County by County and Town by Town Breakdown of Funds: [Menendez, Booker Release Breakdown of \\$10.2B in State & Local COVID Relief Coming to NJ Counties, Municipalities \(senate.gov\)](#)

To receive these funds, the local governments must apply for them; they are not awarded automatically. (([How to acquire funding from the American Rescue Plan Act \(powerdms.com\)](#)))

New Jersey received \$6.2 billion in federal relief from the American Rescue Plan in May, with wide latitude on how to spend it. The state already has allocated about a third of the monies to go towards eviction prevention programs, small businesses, special education and level one trauma centers across the state. The governor can unilaterally spend \$200 million of the federal dollars in up to \$10 million increments. Remaining federal funds must get sign off from the Legislative Joint Budget Oversight Committee, which is under Democratic control. The state has until the end of 2024 to determine how to spend the funds.

Outreach to:

- Front office of each governor's office
- New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Local government decision-makers
- Forward any sign-on letter to your Member of Congress (House and Senate members) if they voted for the American Rescue Plan - only Democratic members voted for it - and thank them for voting for this historic and critical piece of legislation.

EXAMPLE OUTREACH TOOLS:

1. Email template to decision makers identifying specific projects:

Good morning (insert name),

On behalf of (insert organization name), I'm writing to urge the state of (insert state or city) to utilize the opportunity the American Rescue Plan provides to make long-term investments in water infrastructure to meet the demands for safe, accessible water and sewer services. To combat aging and antiquated systems and recurring flooding from storm events, we must prioritize safe drinking water and clean waterways for a stronger and more equitable society. Below are ready-to-fund water infrastructure projects that will address these challenges and meet the intended goals of the American Rescue Plan. (insert project details if applicable)

Thank you,
name

2. Sign on letter

To:

Re: Utilizing the American Rescue Plan

We, the undersigned, respectfully urge **blank** to utilize the opportunity the American Rescue Plan presents to make long-term investments in the critical infrastructure necessary to protect clean water and natural resources in **state/ county/municipality**.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has graded our nation's drinking water infrastructure a C-, its wastewater infrastructure a D+, and its stormwater infrastructure a D which clearly articulates the entirely inadequate condition of essential infrastructure that protect our public health and the environment. And, unfortunately, a disproportionate burden of this infrastructure inadequacy directly impacts environmental justice. We believe that everyone regardless of their zip code is entitled to safe drinking water and clean waterways.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) was a bold and necessary action—not just to rescue the American economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, but to lay the foundation to and begin making the investments need to build a stronger and more equitable society that recognizes the systems issues that have plagued communities for decades. In order for this plan to be a success for all **(New Jerseyans)**, and especially those living in our **county/municipality**, we must ensure that these resources are strategically used to protect and support our natural resources and water infrastructure – of which has some of the highest returns on investments.

We urge that funds from the ARP be prioritized for the following investments:

- Improve Drinking Water and Stormwater Infrastructure. Funding to reduce chronic, contaminated flooding in low-income and communities of color along the lower Delaware River. Antiquated combined sewer systems (CSOs)— in which the stormwater and sewage combine into one pipe— plague residents of Philadelphia, Wilmington, Camden and Chester with raw sewage in basements, streets and parks. Targeted funding from the American Rescue Plan Act would make neighborhoods more livable, provide family-sustaining jobs in green infrastructure, and make this 27 mile stretch of the Delaware River fishable and swimmable to communities who've long been denied safe access.

Additionally, investments in stormwater management and green infrastructure has significant economic benefits to communities, as every dollar invested in green infrastructure can realize \$7 to \$27 in ancillary benefits, including through reductions in crime, improvements in health outcomes, enhancements in water quality, and increased property values, not to mention a decrease in pressures on current, antiquated stormwater infrastructures. Green infrastructure investments have been proven to put people to work; in Philadelphia, for example, it supports 1,000 jobs annually. Smart and coordinated investments in our essential water infrastructures can drive needed public and private investments into our communities, improve water quality, reduce public health disparities and remove toxic contaminants that will ultimately help us secure clean drinking water for all.

- Restore our Green Spaces: **Residents** rely on parks and trails more than ever, but not all communities have sufficient access to safe, open space. A [2019 study published](#) in Landscape

and Urban Planning found that people with more education and higher incomes had better access to parks and green spaces. On the contrary, communities of color were found to have less access to parks and green spaces. Improving access to parks has triple bottom line benefits for our communities. Studies suggest that for every dollar invested in open space preservation, there is a ten-dollar yield of economic benefits, from ecosystem services (such as water purification, waste treatment and flood mitigation), natural goods (such as fish and farm products), to outdoor recreation activities across the entire state. Currently, outdoor recreation contributes \$17.8 billion in consumer spending, \$6.1 billion in wages and salaries, \$1.3 billion in state and local tax revenue annually, as well as 158,000 direct New Jersey jobs. Additionally, park investment significantly raises property values; residences adjacent to parks and preserved open spaces reflect land values 15-20% higher than those a block or more away. Parks, trails, and other green infrastructure can also benefit public health with studies correlating increased exposure to green areas and improved mental health. Improving access to green spaces also promote physical activity, resulting in reduced healthcare costs, and can address the conditions that lead to disparities in health outcomes for poor and marginalized communities, such as in asthma and childhood obesity rates. Enhancing access, updating our parks and trails, and better protecting our existing parks and trails through needed improvements, proper stewardship and adequate staffing should be a core use of ARP funds.

- Build Resilience to Climate Disasters.

Climate change poses a direct and imminent economic risk, one that we are already seeing become more and more costly. Severe weather, flooding, and other associated climate impacts have become more common, threatening lives and millions of dollars in property damage and value lost – for example, Hurricane Sandy cost New Jerseyans over \$29 billion. These major risks strain the adaptive capacity of communities to mitigate hazards, pronounce social inequities, and require significant and coordinated investment to alleviate impacts. Other strategies to build resilience to climate disasters include elevating roads, buildings, and upgrading coastal infrastructure. For every dollar invested in pre-disaster risk reduction, an average of \$7 is saved from reduced flooding risk. This is a worthwhile investment, as New Jersey is one of the states with the most to lose in real estate value due to the anticipated impacts of climate change, over \$4.5 billion in coastal real estate alone.

This is a pivotal moment not just for state/county/municipality but for the entire country. Out of the chaos from the pandemic, we have a chance to rebuild in a way that we might truly strengthen our clean water and climate infrastructure, protect our most vulnerable communities, and support a sustainable and just economy. We are relying on leaders in state/county/municipality to call attention to these problems, direct some of the available American Rescue Plan Act funding to critical projects, and work with national leaders to build a strong and sustained commitment to achieve the healthy future state/county/municipality residents deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact Ed Potosnak at ed.potosnak@njlcsv.org or (732) 991-7574.

Signed,

New Jersey League of Conservation Voters