

# Congressional Leaders Request GAO Study on Clean Water Trust Fund

Yesterday, leaders of the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) and House Ways and Means Committees requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) complete a study on potential revenue sources for a national clean water trust fund.

The request is very similar to the language that was included in the *Water Quality Financing Act of 2007*, H.R. 720, which also asked for a GAO study on viable revenue sources. It was sent in a letter from T&I Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar (D-Minn.), Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Tex.), and Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), member of the House Ways and Means Committee. They state that a dedicated funding source is critical to ensure communities can continue to fulfill their obligations to provide clean and safe water and that the decreasing federal investment in water infrastructure is untenable.

In a released statement, Rep. Blumenauer commented that, "While water infrastructure is often out of sight and out of mind, communities across the country, both urban and rural, are dealing with aging water infrastructure that is in need of repair, replacement, and upgrading. The Federal government has historically played an important role in helping to pay for clean and safe drinking water, but the overall contribution to clean water has shrunk from 78% in 1978 to 3% today."

In particular, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) has been cut to half its historic level of \$1.35 billion and EPA has suggested that funding be phased out completely by 2016. However, EPA estimates a growing water infrastructure gap of \$300-500 billion between what is currently spent and what needs to be spent over the next 20 years. "The Environmental Protection Agency's own data shows that the ever-increasing need for water infrastructure investment is not being met. Federal appropriations are on the decline, and I fully expect that the President's budget request will, again, miss the mark on addressing the nation's water infrastructure needs," Oberstar said.

Reps. Blumenauer and Oberstar are actively seeking stakeholder input on a strategy for trust fund legislation moving forward as they hope to have a bill introduced soon after the study is completed. "Once a sustainable funding source for water infrastructure investment is identified, I hope to take up legislation creating a new Clean Water Trust Fund in the next Congress." - Rep. Oberstar.

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