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By Robert Gray

Report Details Infrastructure Funding

The federal and state governments made approximately $70 billion available to finance water infrastructure in the decade ending in 2000, a new report shows. Of that amount, some $44 billion came from the federal government and $26 billion from the states, all through a wide range of individual programs.

The figures were compiled by the General Accounting Office, a congressional agency, for Sen. Robert Smith of New Hampshire, senior GOP member of the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works, and Sen. Michael Crapo of Idaho, senior Republican member of that committee's subcommittee on water policy. The two members sought the information in connection with a broad review the committee is making of water infrastructure needs.

While citing the results of its survey, GAO also noted that the Water Infrastructure Network, a consortium of industry, municipalities and associations, has estimated the costs of water supply and wastewater capital needs at up to $1 trillion over the next 20 years. That total includes financing costs.

"The actual future needs will likely be met by some combination of local, state, and federal funding sources," the GAO said.

Administration Announces New Watershed Plan

President Bush has asked Congress to approve a $21-million initiative to protect and restore up to 20 of the nation's "most highly valued watersheds."

In announcing the proposed new grant program, Administrator Christie Whitman of the Environmental Protection Agency said it would involve cooperative efforts between EPA and state governors and other interested groups.

"This program will also support local communities in their efforts to expand and improve existing protection measures with tools, training and technical assistance," she said.

Resolving watershed problems is a complex challenge that requires local assessment, involvement and commitment, the administrator commented. The new grants program "will capitalize on the lessons learned from existing community-based preservation efforts," Whitman said.

(The watershed program was announced prior to the release of the full administration budget for the 2002–03 fiscal year. Details of the new budget's proposals for major water programs will be reported in the next issue.)

New Regulation Affects Smaller Systems

Cryptosporidium regulations that have applied to larger water supply systems have been extended to smaller suppliers. New standards set by EPA affect 11,000 small systems serving 18 million people.

The new final rule requires 99 percent removal of *Cryptosporidium* through enhanced filtration. The agency said the *Cryptosporidium* spores, found in animal wastes, can cause intestinal problems and possibly death among some vulnerable groups within the population.

Among the numerous outbreaks of sickness traced to *Cryptosporidium*, the most severe occurred in 1993 in Milwaukee, Wis., where more than 400,000 residents became ill and 50 died.

The spores, EPA noted, cannot be eliminated by commonly used disinfectants such as chlorine. The small systems have three years to reach full compliance with the new rules. EPA estimated the average annual cost per household at $6.24.

Website Offers New Model on TMDL Allocations

EPA has released a new water quality model designed to aid the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for impaired waters.

Allocations for a specific TMDL or watershed are likely to be based on competing priorities such as cost effectiveness and equality of load reductions, the announcement of the new model said.

"Final allocation determinations are policy decisions and should reflect public perceptions about acceptable tradeoffs," the agency said. It described watershed-modeling frameworks as "tools that can be used to help evaluate the tradeoffs associated with different allocations."

Those frameworks can identify cost-minimizing allocations and compare cost distributions under different allocation scenarios.

The new model is available at www.epa.gov/waterscience/models/allocations.

New Rules Set on Coal Mine Effluents

EPA has amended regulations designed to prevent water quality and other environmental damage from abandoned coal mines in the western and Appalachian states.

Under the new rules, remining operations will be required to implement strategies that control pollutant releases and ensure that the pollutant discharges during the remining are less than the pollutant levels released from the abandoned site prior to the remining.

The agency said the guidelines for western alkaline coal mines will allow miners to install control technologies better suited to reclaiming mining lands in arid and semi-arid regions,.

Additional information on the new rules is available at www.epa.gov/guide/coal/index.htm.

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