



Fact Sheet About the Nation’s Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

Much of our nation’s water infrastructure — the systems that treat, distribute, collect and clean water — was built nearly a century ago for a smaller population. It is aging and overburdened. Even with newer facilities and innovative alternatives, upgrades are required to keep pace with growing needs and environmental challenges. The level of investment by governments in maintaining water infrastructure has declined dramatically. In addition, sewer and water rates are not always reflective of the true cost of service. We are at a critical point for sustainable water infrastructure across the United States.

Water’s Presence on Earth

Water covers 70 percent of the Earth’s surface, yet accessible fresh water makes up less than 1 percent of the world’s total supply.

- General Accounting Office, *Freshwater Supply: States’ View of How Federal Agencies Could Help Them Meet the Challenges of Expected Shortages* (July 2003), p. 12. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03514.pdf>

Clean Water Act Passed

The Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts were passed in the early 1970s. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the facilities built to meet the requirements of these acts will have to be replaced in the next 2 decades.

- Congressional Budget Office, *Future Investment in Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure* (November 2002), p. 9. <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=3983&sequence=0>

Impact of Clean Water on Public Health

The Centers for Disease Control credits treatment of drinking water in the US since 1900 for the virtual elimination of water borne disease such as typhoid, cholera and hepatitis A and helping to increase life expectancy in the US by 30 years.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Achievements in Public Health, 1900-1999: Control of Infectious Diseases.” *CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. July 30, 1999. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4829a1.htm>

Impact of Clean Water on the Economy

Clean water supports a \$50 billion per year recreation industry, \$300 billion in coastal tourism and \$45 billion in commercial fishing and shell fishing industries, and hundreds of billions of dollars a year in basic manufacturing that relies on clean water.

- Water Infrastructure Network, *Water Infrastructure Now: Recommendations for Clean and Safe Water in the 21st Century* (April 2000), p. 1. http://www.win-water.org/win_reports/pub2/winow.pdf

Number of Municipal Wastewater Systems

There are more than 16,000 publicly owned treatment works wastewater systems in the U.S. used to make used water safe to return to nature.

- Congressional Budget Office, *Future Investment in Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure* (November 2002), p. 1. <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=3983&sequence=0>

Miles of Sewer and Water Pipe

In addition to sources of water and treatment facilities, America’s water systems include 800,000 of miles of water pipe and 600,000 miles of sewer line – all part of our nation’s water infrastructure.

- General Accounting Office, *Water Infrastructure: Comprehensive Asset Management Has Potential to Help*

Utilities Better Identify Needs and Plan Future Investments (March 2004), p. 14.
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04461.pdf>

Life Expectancy of Sewer Lines

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that sewer lines have a useful life of 50 years (although lifetimes can be longer depending on maintenance and local conditions).

— Congressional Budget Office, Future Investment in Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure (November 2002), p. 8. <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=3983&sequence=0>

Impact of Age on Infrastructure

The vast majority of the nation's pipe network was installed after World War II and is now reaching the end of its useful life.

— Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure GAP Analysis Report (September 2002), p. 14. <http://www.epa.gov/owm/gapreport.pdf>

The General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that one-third of the nation's large water systems had 20 percent of their pipeline nearing replacement age, and for one-tenth of the large systems, fully 50 percent of their pipe was at or near replacement age.

— General Accounting Office, Water Infrastructure: Comprehensive Asset Management Has Potential to Help Utilities Better Identify Needs and Plan Future Investments (March 2004), p. 15.
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04461.pdf>

Water Loss Due to Leaking Pipes

Congressional Budget Office estimates many rural and urban systems lose 20 percent or more of the water they produce through leaks in their pipes.

— Congressional Budget Office, Future Investment in Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure (November 2002), p. 8. <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=3983&sequence=0>

Cost of Infrastructure Replacement

By 2030, the average [drinking water] utility will have to spend about three and a half times as much on pipe replacement due to wear out than it does today. The average utility will also spend three times as much on repairs in that year as it spends today, as pipes get older and more prone to breakage.

— American Water Works Association, Dawn of the Replacement Era: Reinvesting in Drinking Water Infrastructure (May 2001), p. 6. http://www.win-water.org/win_reports/infrastructure.pdf&e=42

Drinking water and wastewater utilities will need to invest hundreds of billions of dollars in their capital infrastructure over the next two decades, according to EPA, CBO, and the Water Infrastructure Network. Projected needs range from \$485 billion to nearly \$1.2 trillion.

— General Accounting Office, Water Infrastructure: Comprehensive Asset Management Has Potential to Help Utilities Better Identify Needs and Plan Future Investments (March 2004), p. 13.
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04461.pdf>

Congressional Budget Office estimates that for the years 2000 to 2019, annual costs for infrastructure investment will average between \$11.6 billion and \$20.1 billion for drinking water systems and between \$13.0 billion and \$20.9 billion for wastewater systems.

— Congressional Budget Office, Future Investment in Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure (November 2002), p. ix.

Infrastructure's Impact on Water Pollution

The EPA reports that by 2016, water pollution levels may increase to those observed in the 1970s if the nation's cities do not invest in infrastructure.