

Assuring Quality Water Infrastructure Act of 2019

Senator Shelley Moore Capito and Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

The *Assuring Quality Water Infrastructure Act of 2019* provides funding to improve infrastructure asset management on the part of small public water systems. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines asset management as “a process for maintaining a desired level of customer service at the best appropriate cost.”¹ Infrastructure asset management is the application of that concept to physical assets, lowering costs through the identification and prevention of infrastructure failures. Infrastructure asset management is increasingly important for public water systems as potable water loss rates rise across the United States.

Recent estimates of potable water loss rates due to leakage range from 20-30% in some areas, to close to 75% in others.²³ Identification and prevention of unknown leaks is necessary to improve the efficiency of water systems’ operations and support their financial health, but small systems often lack the resources with which to implement infrastructure asset management. While the EPA offers educational resources on asset management implementation for public water systems, and states are required to provide technical assistance to public water systems on asset management as a condition of receiving their full apportionment under the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund, further assistance is needed to help ensure that small public water systems and their partners are able to improve the efficiency of potable water provision.

WHAT THE ACT DOES:

- Directs the EPA Administrator to establish a program to provide grants to units of local government, as well as non-profit entities that own or operate a public water system, for the purpose of improving infrastructure asset management on the part of one or more small public water systems. A small public water system is defined as one that serves fewer than 10,000 people.
- Describes eligible activities to improve infrastructure asset management as including: the development of asset inventories and maps, the deployment of leak detection technology, the deployment of metering technology, and training in other asset management concepts, tools, and techniques.
- Prescribes that entities receiving a grant must: provide information on the infrastructure asset management deficiencies to be addressed, describe how improvements to infrastructure asset management will be maintained beyond the life of the project, and enter into an agreement with the state within which a project is located to provide copies of any asset data collected, in addition to other requirements. This will help ensure continued improvements to infrastructure asset management.
- Authorizes \$5 million annually for Fiscal Years 2021 through 2025.

¹ “Asset Management 101,” EPA, <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/assetmgt101.pdf>.

² Steven Folkman, “Water Main Break Rates in the USA and Canada: A Comprehensive Study” (Utah State University, 2018), p. 38.

³ Caity Coyne, “Money Down the Drain: WV Losing Most of Water it Produces,” *Charleston Gazette-Mail* (Charleston, WV), Jan. 12, 2019. https://www.wvgazette.com/report_for_america/money-down-the-drain-wv-losing-most-of-water-it/article_40dbcf49-2f61-56d6-8146-ae088fa2d436.html