Public Comment and Response Document for the following PA Bulletin Notice:

NOTICES

PENNSYLVANIA INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AUTHORITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs; Federal Fiscal Year 2020 Intended Use Plans; Available for Public Comment

[50 Pa.B. 2909]
[Saturday, June 6, 2020]

1. Comment: [Helen Ortmann – online submittal] The DEP has an obligation to PA citizens to ensure that we all have access to clean and safe water for drinking and other uses. This obligation supersedes the desires of corporations to minimize their costs and maximize their profits.

   Response: Thank you for your comment. Common rating and ranking factors for both clean water and drinking water projects allow for equal consideration of many types of projects. These project rating and ranking factors are public health, community health, infrastructure health, compliance with current laws and regulations, economic development, affordability, distressed community, brownfield redevelopment, and redevelopment of existing population centers (infill).

2. Comment: [Caroline Koch – Email submittal] WaterNow Alliance appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Intended Use Plans (IUPs) for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds. WaterNow is a nonprofit network of 600+ local water leaders in 39 states—including members from Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Lancaster, and boroughs across Pennsylvania—advancing sustainable, affordable, and climate resilient water strategies in their communities. We have reviewed the draft IUPs and are encouraged that the plans identify several Green Project Reserve eligible projects and allocates funding for sustainable, green stormwater infrastructure projects.

   Green stormwater infrastructure and other onsite installations and technologies distributed widely across a community such as water use efficiency measures, watershed restoration, lead line replacements and more, supplement, extend and serve the same functions as more conventional, centralized water supply infrastructure. These distributed approaches are the exact types of projects meant to receive SRF funding through the Green Project Reserve.

Localized solutions are also often less expensive than larger public works projects keeping rates affordable, while building local resilience to disasters and ability to withstand shifts resulting from climate change. Critically, green and distributed strategies provide lasting economic benefits, including near-term permanent local green jobs and local economic development. Distributed water management strategies also go a long way to address water equity issues around access to clean water and more affordable rates, and provide other co-benefits including improved public health, energy efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gases, increased open space, increased property values and reduced crime.

Given DEP and PENNVEST's commitments expressed in the IUPs to provide funding for Green Project Reserve projects, we recommend updating the Summary of Green Technologies Table to include all EPA defined green project types to ensure all eligible green projects are considered for Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF funding. As a reference for determining which projects are eligible for Green Project Reserve funding, EPA has developed the GPR Cross Walk Table that is broken down by project categories (green infrastructure, energy efficiency, water efficiency, and environmentally innovative) and lists specific project types within each of these categories that are categorically eligible, are eligible if a business case is provided, and are not eligible. DEP and PENNVEST's Summary of Green Technologies Table tracks EPA's crosswalk. However, the project types in the below table are included in EPA's list but not DEP and PENNVEST's summary table. (Project types in blue require a business case; all other project types are categorically eligible.)

Green Infrastructure	Water Efficiency	Environmentally Innovative
▪ Constructed wetlands	▪ Water conservation incentive programs, e.g., rebates	▪ Total/integrated water resources management planning likely to result in a capital project
▪ Sustainable landscaping and site design	▪ Install or retrofit water efficient devices, e.g., plumbing fixtures, appliances	▪ Utility Sustainability Plan
▪ Street tree/urban forestry	▪ Water audit and water conservation plans	▪ POTW planning activities to adapt to long-term effects of climate change and/or extreme weather
▪ Other practices that mimic natural hydrology to prevent wet weather flows	▪ Retrofit or replace landscape irrigation systems with more efficient systems, e.g., moisture and rain sensing controllers	▪ Projects that facilitate POTW adaptation to climate change identified by a carbon footprint analysis or climate adaptation study
▪ Fee simple land purchase or easement	▪ New water efficient landscape irrigation	▪ Educational activities and demonstration projects for water or energy efficiency
		▪ Projects that achieve the goals of utility asset management plans

Omitting the above-listed project types may be narrowing the scope of projects for which water utilities seek SRF funding under the Green Project Reserve—a program designed to incentivize investments in a wide range of green, localized strategies. In particular, localized infrastructure investments are most efficiently made in the form of subsidies, financial incentives and rebates for consumers, including private businesses, commercial, industrial and institutional enterprises, residences, and other public entities (such as local parks, schools, transportation agencies, etc.). EPA's crosswalk expressly lists these key implementation strategies. Encouraging and enabling local water utilities to access SRF funding to scale investments in these vital incentive programs advances the purposes of the Green Project Reserve and represents investments in strategies that supplement and extend the life of critical built infrastructure.

Conclusion

Localized water infrastructure has enormous potential to not only sustainably manage our water resources now and for future generations, but to also foster long-lasting economic recovery for Pennsylvania communities facing critical needs for jobs and renewal. We appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to working with you to transform the nation's water infrastructure to secure our water future. Please feel free to contact me by email at cak@waternow.org or by phone at 415-813-8044 if you have any questions.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The “Summary of Green Technologies” table is not all-inclusive but represents the most common types of eligible projects that typically apply for funding. This table also identifies energy efficiency improvement projects eligible for Green Project Reserve. The limits of the table are not meant to limit applicants who would like to apply for funding. All PENNVEST eligible applicants are encouraged to apply for funding.