



# Press Release

## Portland Water Bureau

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## EPA Announces New \$319 Million WIFIA Loan for Improvements to a Critical Drinking Water System in Oregon

*New, low-cost funding to reduce impact to ratepayers*

**Portland, Ore.**— Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a \$319 million Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan to the City of Portland, serving Oregon’s Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties. The loan supports construction of the new Bull Run Treatment Projects to meet federal and state safe drinking water standards. The new filtration facility and related pipelines will filter water from Portland’s Bull Run supply before it goes to customers to remove a pathogen called *Cryptosporidium*.

“Securing another major WIFIA loan for the Bull Run Treatment Program is a huge step forward in our work to ensure clean, safe, and reliable water for Oregonians,” Sen. Jeff Merkley said. “Oregon’s leaders deserve a tremendous share of the credit for this milestone, as it was their persistence in brainstorming solutions to water infrastructure challenges that led me to create the WIFIA program. With this new federal backing, not only will Portland-area folks be getting safer drinking water, but we will be creating thousands of construction jobs and saving working families money in the process. This is exactly the win-win-win WIFIA was created to achieve for our communities.”

This is the second WIFIA loan provided to support the Bull Run Treatment Projects, which will help protect the public health of residents across the region.

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In addition to removing *Cryptosporidium* from the Bull Run water source, filtration will provide consistent, high-quality drinking water to meet today's water quality standards, help address future risks and regulations and improve system resilience.

"Last summer a wildfire burned within two miles of our drinking water facilities in the Bull Run," said Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. "Filtration is the versatile solution Portland needs to address the water quality risks posed by the seismic, wildfire- and weather-related issues we will face in the future."

The WIFIA program's advantageous terms for the second WIFIA loan will help the city save an estimated \$140 million of interest costs over the life of the loan. This second loan brings Portland's total WIFIA loans to over \$1 billion for the Bull Run Treatment Program.

"Thriving communities expect and depend on reliable drinking water," said Bruno Pigott, EPA Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water. "These two WIFIA loans mark the largest EPA contribution ever to a drinking water project, and an impressive step forward for the City of Portland as they ensure safe drinking water for their residents."

The projects will help create 6,100 jobs, and over \$400 million will go to firms certified by the Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID). This highlights the City of Portland's ongoing initiative to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion. The City of Portland's Public Works Service Area invests in a job apprenticeship program that recruits individuals from diverse backgrounds and life experiences to learn trade skills and earn rewarding jobs throughout the City.

"As a Public Works Service Area, we are dedicated to making thoughtful investments into our essential infrastructure with our community, environment, and sustainability in mind," said Deputy City Administrator for Public Works, Priya Dhanapal. "Our goal is to not only support our current needs but anticipate the needs of future generations. Additionally, the investments we are making into the Bull Run Filtration Plant, along with other Public Works projects, will create jobs today and provide safe, reliable infrastructure for our community members, businesses, and industries to thrive for many generations. The total economic contribution to the tri-county area is more than \$1.59 billion in output over the first 10-year period, demonstrating the considerable impact of this investment in our community."

The construction contracts for the new filtration facility and pipelines will include Community Benefits Agreements that set workforce equity goals for people of color and women in the trades. The contracts also maximize opportunities for Disadvantaged, Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Emerging Small Businesses, and Service-Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise contractors and subcontractors.

"Our first and most important priority is to reliably deliver safe, clean water to the nearly 1 million people who depend on us," said Water Bureau Director Edward Campbell. "This filtration facility is a long-term investment that will pay dividends in protecting our livability, our economy, and our health now and for generations to come. And with the support of the EPA and this low-interest financing, we're able to reduce the costs of this valuable project for our community members."

Since its creation, EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program has announced nearly \$21 billion in financing to support \$45 billion in water infrastructure projects that are strengthening drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure while creating over 150,000 jobs.

## **WIFIA Background**

Established by the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014, the [WIFIA program](#) is a federal loan program administered by the EPA. The WIFIA program aims to accelerate investment in the nation's water infrastructure by providing long-term, low-cost supplemental credit assistance for regionally and nationally significant projects. The WIFIA program has an active pipeline of pending applications for projects that will result in billions of dollars of water infrastructure investment and thousands of jobs.

EPA's WIFIA loans are an important piece of the Biden-Harris Administration's initiative of Investing in America's Infrastructure. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, signed in November of 2021, provides \$50 billion to invest in water infrastructure. Today, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-funded projects are breaking ground nationwide while tackling legacy pollution, upgrading drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, and making communities more resilient to the effects of climate change.

EPA is currently in its 8th selection round for WIFIA financing. In this round, EPA is offering \$6.5 billion through WIFIA, and \$1 billion through SWIFIA, which is a loan program exclusively for State infrastructure financing authority borrowers. EPA is currently accepting letters of interest for WIFIA and SWIFIA loans. [Learn more about submitting a letter of interest for a WIFIA loan.](#)

In addition to WIFIA loans, there are many federal funding resources available for communities and utilities to improve vital water and wastewater resources. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation's infrastructure and competitiveness.

Learn more about the [EPA's WIFIA Program](#) and water infrastructure investments under the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#).

## **About the Portland Water Bureau**

The Portland Water Bureau serves water to almost a million people in the Portland area. Portland's water system includes two great water sources, 54 tanks and reservoirs, and 2,250 miles of pipes. With 600 employees working on everything from water treatment to customer service, the Water Bureau is committed to serving excellent water every minute of every day.