



WISCONSIN RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

2024 IMPACT ON WISCONSIN



Assisting, educating and representing our members in the wise use of water resources





Provides Training...

WRWA continues to be the leading provider of training in the state of Wisconsin to those in the water and wastewater industries. In fact, WRWA is one of the leading trainers of water and wastewater system personnel in the nation.

In 2024, WRWA conducted a total of **194** training sessions and events. These were attended by **6,166** operators, managers, administrative personnel, plumbers, and business representatives.

Technical Assistance...

Technical assistance to operators of water and wastewater systems in Wisconsin is the backbone of our service to our membership. WRWA conducted **3,105 actual on-site technical assistance visits** in 2024 in addition to **over 5,623 phone calls** to and from systems. WRWA currently has a field staff of 10 providing on-site technical assistance to water and wastewater systems in the state.

WRWA technical assistance is provided in several areas, including regulatory compliance, utility management, solving distribution system problems, treatment, emergency response, source water protection, system operations assistance, energy efficiency, and providing loaner equipment.

AND Resources for Project Funding!

Customer Name	Project Name	District	County	Loan Amount	Grant Amount
Village of Sharon	Sharon WWTP	1	Walworth	\$2,692,000	\$600,000
Village of New Glarus	FY24 Water Reservoir	2	Green	\$2,300,000	\$0
Lyndon Station, Village of	FY22 WWTP	3	Juneau	\$1,552,000	\$0
VILLAGE OF BAY CITY	FY24 SEARCH grant Water	3	Pierce	\$0	\$30,000
Village of Kendall	FY24 PPG Sewer	3	Monroe	\$0	\$30,000
Village of Kendall	FY24 PPG Water	3	Monroe	\$0	\$15,000
Village of Taylor	FY23 - SEARCH Grant	3	Jackson	\$0	\$25,000
Village of Wheeler	FY24 Well project	3	Dunn	\$648,000	\$884,000
Village of Wheeler	FY24 WWTP/Lift Station Upgrades	3	Dunn	\$741,000	\$1,265,000
Burnett SD #1	FY24 - Wastewater Regionalization	6	Dodge	\$380,000	\$1,644,000
Village of St Nazianz	FY24 WWTP Improvements	6	Manitowoc	\$4,301,000	\$4,000,000
City of Rhinelander	FY24 Messer Street Sewer Project	7	Oneida	\$5,217,000	\$1,300,000
Grand View SD #1	FY 23 SEARCH Grant	7	Bayfield	\$0	\$30,000
Village of Clayton	FY24 SEARCH Grant	7	Polk	\$0	\$30,000
Newcap, Inc.	DWS FY24	8	Brown	\$0	\$323,263
				\$17,831,000	\$10,176,263



Dear Congress: Please prioritize what is working.

Small and rural communities have the very important public responsibility of complying with all applicable federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act regulations and for supplying the public with safe drinking water and sanitation every second of every day. Over 91% of the approximately 50,000 community water systems serve fewer than 10,000 persons and 81% serve fewer than 3,300 persons. Small and rural communities often have difficulty complying with complicated federal mandates and providing safe/affordable drinking water and sanitation due to limited economies of scale and lack of technical expertise. This difficulty is eased due to ongoing and continuing support offered through rural water training and technical assistance programs as highlighted below.

	Initiative	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Enacted	FY2025 House Report	FY2025 Senate Report	FY2026 Request
USDA	Circuit Rider Technical Assistance	\$21,180,000	\$21,817,000	\$21,817,000	\$22,470,000	\$23,562,000
	Wastewater Disposal Technical Assistance	\$37,500,000	\$35,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$35,000,000	\$35,000,000
	Grassroots Source Water Protection Program	\$7,500,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000
	Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program	\$596,404,000	\$595,972,000 ^A	\$496,716,000 ^B	\$496,490,000	\$500,000,000
	Water & Waste Disposal Revolving Loan Funds	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
EPA	Safe Drinking Water Act Technical Assistance	\$30,700,000	\$30,700,000	\$35,000,000	\$32,700,000	\$35,000,000
	Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance	\$27,000,000	\$25,500,000	\$25,500,000	\$27,500,000	\$27,500,000
	Clean Water State Revolving Fund	\$1,638,861,000	\$1,638,861,000	\$1,203,013,000 ^C	\$1,638,861,000 ^C	\$1,638,861,000
	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	\$1,126,101,000	\$1,126,101,000	\$883,515,000 ^D	\$1,126,101,000 ^D	\$1,126,101,000
DOL	National Rural Water Apprenticeship Program	Language included	Language included	\$20,000,000	\$0	\$20,000,000

A: WEP Earmarks \$117,484,737 **B:** WEP Earmarks: House- \$119,101,000 (Senate did not include) **C:** CWSRF Earmarks: House \$470,139,492 |Senate \$345,125,000 **D:** DWSRF Earmarks: House \$410,309,777 |Senate \$243,639,000

How Can Representatives/Senators Support Rural Water?

1. Write the Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs and Ranking Members in support of Rural Water's **five** funding priorities (or include in Members' formal appropriations requests);
2. Personally contact the Subcommittee Chairs and Ranking Members in support of Rural Water's **five** funding priorities; and
3. Ask the key staff person in each office to contact the Subcommittees in support of Rural Water's **five** funding priorities.

Subcommittee	House	Senate
USDA	Chair TBD Ranking Member TBD	Chair TBD Ranking Member TBD
Interior (EPA)	Chair TBD Ranking Member TBD	Chair TBD Ranking Member TBD
Labor	Chair TBD Ranking Member TBD	Chair TBD Ranking Member TBD

The National Rural Water Association represents over 31,000 small and rural community members dedicated to drinking water quality, environmental protection and public health protection.

Description of Rural Water Priorities

1. USDA Circuit Riders

Since 1980, Circuit Riders have provided the primary assistance to small communities for the operation of safe and clean drinking water supplies and compliance with water regulations. This assistance protects the sizable investment the federal government has made in rural water infrastructure. Circuit Riders are in the field every day helping systems with compliance, operations, maintenance, management, disaster response and training. The Circuit Rider Program has long been one of USDA's most successful public-private partnerships, efficiently and effectively using appropriated funds to provide technical assistance and training to rural communities through state based nonprofit associations.

2. USDA Farm Service Agency Grassroots Source Water Protection

This is the only statewide local community-based initiative ensuring environmentally progressive local land-use decisions without the controversy and bureaucracy of regulatory programs. It provides each state with at least one full-time person to organize and assist rural communities, farmers, and other land-use interests in the implementation of source water protection plans including non-point source (runoff) protection practices in agriculture regions. This initiative allows the people who benefit from environmental protection to take responsibility for achieving it—ensuring its success and eliminating local controversy.

3. EPA Safe Drinking Water Act Technical Assistance and Training

Since 1977, small and rural communities have relied on local/on-site technical assistance and training for compliance with the myriad of federal EPA regulations, avoiding EPA fines, and operating drinking water and wastewater supplies. According to small and rural communities, EPA-funded local initiatives are the most effective environmental protection efforts for drinking water & wastewater, ground water, source water, and compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance—rural water provides them the shared technical resources to do it.

4. EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance

Small and rural communities have more difficulty affording public wastewater service due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. This challenge is compounded by the fact that rural communities have lower average median household incomes and often have higher rates of poverty. PL 155-270, enacted in October 2018, authorized a new technical assistance program for small and rural communities to improve water quality, operate and maintain public wastewater treatment utilities and comply with federal Clean Water Act standards.

5. National Rural Water Apprenticeship Program

Since 2016, NRWA has collaborated with State Rural Water Associations, USDA, DOL, EPA, and local rural water utilities to build the first nationally recognized DOL Registered Apprenticeship Program for water and wastewater system operators. Employment data indicates up to 50% of the rural water workforce will leave the water industry over the next 10 years. Rural water and wastewater utilities need a pipeline of skilled workers to help ensure clean and safe water for the public and to maintain the water infrastructure necessary to keep rural service areas economically viable. To date, thirty-four State Rural Water Associations have federally approved Registered Apprenticeship Programs and are currently offering a job creation program specifically designed by industry leaders to attract, train and retain the next generation rural water workforce with over 900 apprentices enrolled or graduated so far.

**NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2026 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY**

Name of program: **Circuit Rider Program**

Appropriations bill: Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: TBD

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

House subcommittee Chairman: TBD

House subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

Department: United States Department of Agriculture

Agency: Rural Utilities Service (within Rural Development)

Appropriations account: Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program Account

Authorization: 7 USC 1926(a)(22)

FY2026 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History	
FY2021	\$20,157,000
FY2022	\$20,762,000
FY2023	\$21,180,000
FY2024	\$21,817,000
FY2025	TBD

FY2026 request: \$23,562,000

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests an appropriation of \$23,562,000 for the Circuit Rider Program for FY2026.

The Circuit Rider Program is a five-year competitive contract that was awarded to NRWA on November 1, 2020. The final year of that contract began on November 1, 2024, with a cost of \$22,470,000. This number, or \$22,470,000, is consistent with our FY2025 request and the number pending within the FY2025 Senate reported bill. The FY2025 House reported bill includes \$21,817,000, which is the FY2024 enacted level.

The Rural Development contracting officer requires NRWA to include a cost escalator for annual inflationary purposes necessary to maintain 132 Circuit Riders and to provide the same level of services. Also required is the establishment of a management reserve account to address unforeseen circumstances. The FY2026 request level, or \$23,562,000, is 7.9% increase (\$1,745,000) over the FY2024 enacted level of \$21,817,000. This number, or \$23,562,000, compounds the increase for two fiscal years and includes the federally required cost factors listed above.

USDA Circuit Rider Justification: Increase the FY2024 enacted level of \$21,817,000 by 7.9%, or \$1,745,000, to \$23,562,000 for FY2026.

USDA Rural Development Circuit Rider: Since 1980, the Circuit Rider Program has been one of USDA's most successful public-private partnerships, efficiently and effectively using appropriated funds to provide technical expertise, training, regulatory compliance, management and disaster assistance to rural communities through state based nonprofit organizations.

There are currently 132 full-time permanent Circuit Riders deployed in the field in all 50 states and Territories. As previously mentioned, this funding request is based on the federal contract requirements and regardless of the appropriations level, the terms and conditions of the contract require NRWA to continue to provide the same level of service, even with interrupted, delayed or reduced federal funding.

State Rural Water Associations provide non-federal matching money to cover their actual cost. In the last reporting cycle, State Rural Water Associations provided \$1,450,510 in non-federal funds to cover the full cost of delivering this program.

In addition to the core services Circuit Riders have provided for decades, demand for these critical services has increased and evolved. Included in these expanded efforts are additional emergency response and recovery efforts and requests, cyber security assistance, and increased regulatory demands to include compliance with the Lead and Copper and PFAS rules. Circuit Riders have also increased their assistance to address operator vacancies attributed to an aging workforce and addressing the increased challenges related to operating and maintaining aging infrastructure.

Experience and Benefits: Personnel turnover within this program is very rare. Circuit Riders have approximately 3,000 years of combined experience in the water and wastewater industry. This experience and dedication to the overall mission reaps rewards in additional cost savings provided to the communities served. With this seasoned experienced staff, salary and benefit costs are higher.

Circuit Riders Protect Federal Investments and Public Health: Circuit Rider assistance has become even more critical with the loss of over 1,000 USDA Rural Development staff in the field. Circuit Riders' on-site, hands-on assistance, combined with trusted peer-to-peer relationships, enhances all operations including fiscal management, disaster assistance, governance, regulatory compliance, all essential for the sustainability of water and wastewater utilities. This assistance enhances the water system's ability to repay their government debt, protects the low cost of this program while maintaining and enhancing the public health in rural communities. In addition, the Circuit Riders are considered essential employees to perform Mission Critical Services for the U.S. Government during a lapse of appropriations and public health emergencies.

**NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2026 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY**

Name of program: **Grassroots Source Water Protection Program**

Appropriations bill: Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: TBD

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

House subcommittee Chairman: TBD

House subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

Department: United States Department of Agriculture

Agency: Farm Service Agency

Appropriations account: Grassroots Source Water Protection Program

Authorization: 16 U.S.C. 3839bb–2

FY2026 President’s budget request: TBD

Funding History	
FY2021	\$6,500,000
FY2022	\$6,500,000
FY2023	\$7,500,000
FY2024	\$7,000,000
FY2025	TBD

FY2026 request: \$7,500,000

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests an appropriation of \$7,500,000, consistent with the FY2025 Senate reported bill. The FY2025 House reported bill includes \$7,000,000, which is the FY2024 enacted level. NRWA requested, and Congress appropriated \$6.5 million to carry out this initiative from FY2016 to FY2022. For FY2023, Congress increased this account by \$1,000,000 to allow additional activities to include, but are not limited to, enhanced assistance to address nutrient runoff from highly erodible cropland; decline in water quantity and quality related to drought; chemical security mapping; and coordination implementing source water protection practices in high priority areas, as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

NRWA currently maintains 55 full-time Grassroots Source Water Protection Program Specialists in the field. Every state has one full-time Source Water Specialist with two Specialists currently provided in Colorado, California, Kansas, Minnesota, and Montana.

FSA Source Water Justification: Increase the FY2024 enacted level of \$7,000,000 by \$500,000, consistent with FY2025 Senate reported level of \$7,500,000, to maintain current field staff, services, and activities.

Grassroots Source Water Protection Initiative: Protecting public health is the top priority in every water and wastewater system in America. Since 1990, the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) and State Rural Water Associations have assisted water utilities and rural communities in identifying, controlling, and eliminating pollutants from the nation's water resources. The NRWA Source Water Protection Program is built around small water utilities, local businesses, agriculture, government, and other groups working together to develop and implement strategies to protect their drinking water sources. It is a voluntary, grassroots planning effort that builds local responsibility and creates more sustainable communities.

Source Water Protection: The FY2026 source water protection program appropriation of \$7,500,000 will allow NRWA to maintain 55 full-time field employees to continue to provide this essential service with enhanced activities.

Prevention vs. Remediation: This cooperative program has made significant progress in reducing point source pollution from industrial, agricultural, municipal, and even household sources. The program has also made progress in the challenging area of nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution results from activities over large areas, such as runoff from agriculture, industry, and transportation that flows into water sources. In addition to protecting the health and welfare of U.S. communities, source water protection efforts save consumers money. The USDA estimates damages from soil erosion costs between \$2 billion to \$8 billion per year. The EPA estimates that public water systems spend an additional \$200 million per year just to remove excess nitrate to meet federal drinking water standards. A small community's nominal investment in implementing and adhering to a source water protection plan can avoid substantial remediation costs.

This is the only statewide local community-based initiative ensuring environmentally progressive local land-use decisions without the controversy and bureaucracy of regulatory programs. Currently there are 55 full-time specialists employed to organize and assist rural communities, farmers, and other land-use interests in the implementation of source water protection plans including nonpoint source (runoff) protection practices in agriculture regions. State Associations provided \$598,962 of non-federal matching funds to carry out this initiative from December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024. This initiative allows the people who benefit from environmental protection to take responsibility for achieving it—ensuring its success and eliminating local controversy. Through comprehensive planning efforts that identify potential threats to the water supply, communities proactively maintain local sources of safe and clean water. Additionally, by developing and implementing a source water protection plan, communities can help minimize the future need for expensive upgrades to treatment facilities.

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2026 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **EPA Safe Drinking Water Act Technical Assistance**

Appropriations bill: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: TBD

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

House subcommittee Chairman: TBD

House subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Appropriations account: Environmental Programs and Management

Authorization: Safe Drinking Water Act (42 USC 300j-1(e))

FY2026 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History

FY2021	\$21,700,000
FY2022	\$25,700,000
FY2023	\$30,700,000
FY2024	\$30,700,000
FY2025	TBD

FY2026 request: \$35,000,000

The National Rural Water Association requests report language, consistent with the House FY2025 reported bill (see below) appropriating \$35,000,000 under this account to provide \$26,000,000 dedicated to the technical assistance activities as prescribed under the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Act. Small and rural communities rely on local/on-site technical assistance and training for compliance with federal EPA regulations, avoiding EPA fines, and operating drinking and wastewater supplies.

Report Language: *Environmental Protection: National Priorities.*- The bill provides \$35,000,000. The Committee directs that funds be used for a competitive grant program for qualified non-profit organizations to provide technical assistance for improved water quality or safe drinking water, adequate wastewater to small systems, or individual private well owners. The Agency shall provide \$26,000,000 for Grass roots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act, for activities specified under Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j-1(e)(8)). The Agency is directed to provide funding to the most qualified and experienced non-profit organizations in providing technical assistance to small water systems and to issue the grant awards from this program on an annual basis.

EPA Technical Assistance Justification: Enact the House's FY2025 reported level of \$35,000,000 and follow the Congressional intent of Public Law 114-98 for FY2026.

EPA Technical Assistance Authorization: The President signed the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act into law (Public Law 114-98) on December 11, 2015. The House of Representatives unanimously passed the bill on November 30, 2015 and the Senate on June 9, 2015 (also unanimously). The authorization was modified in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (H.R.3684, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) to ensure the funding is used in the most beneficial manner for rural and small communities.

The purpose of the Act is to require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) follow Congressional intent in administering directed appropriations to assist small and rural communities to comply with federal environmental mandates. The Act authorizes the EPA to provide technical assistance to small and rural communities to assist them with: (1) compliance with the myriad of federal regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act; (2) operation and maintenance of their water utilities; and (3) public health protection through the supply of safe public drinking water.

Technical Assistance Demand: Small and rural communities often have a difficult time, due to their limited customer base and technical capacities, providing safe water and complying with federal standards. This is compounded by the fact that small and rural communities often have lower median household incomes and higher water rates compared to larger communities. As a result, the cost of compliance is often dramatically higher per household.

The vast majority of U.S. drinking water supplies are small; 91% of community water systems serve a population of fewer than 10,000 people. Some communities are so small they rely on volunteers to operate their drinking water supply. Small communities in violation of the federal rules are subject to \$25,000 per-day civil penalties. We are urging Congress to fully fund the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act portion at \$26,000,000 and ensure funding is limited to qualified, experienced technical assistance providers to effectively serve the needs of rural utilities

Experience: Since 1977, NRWA has assisted small and rural communities in providing safe drinking water and ensured access to the expertise of an experienced, trustworthy technician. This technical assistance provides for efficient system operation and maintenance and affordable compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act mandates. Small and rural communities are struggling under new federal regulations, complex funding program applications, and continuing mandatory operator training requirements. Recent EPA awards for this initiative do not adequately address the needs of small and rural communities that need help as soon as possible.

**NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2026 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY**

Name of program: **EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance**

Appropriations bill: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: TBD

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

House subcommittee Chairman: TBD

House subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Appropriations account: State and Tribal Assistance Grants Account

Authorization: America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (section 4103), "Technical Assistance for Treatment Works"

FY2026 President's budget request: TBD

Funding History

FY2021	\$18,000,000
FY2022	\$20,000,000
FY2023	\$27,000,000
FY2024	\$25,500,000
FY2025	TBD

FY2026 request: \$27,500,000

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests \$27,500,000, consistent with the FY2025 Senate reported bill, to fund section 4103 America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. This competitive grant program provides small and rural communities with the technical assistance necessary to improve water quality, operate and maintain public wastewater treatment utilities, assist with permitting, comply with federal Clean Water Act regulations and apply for federal funding under the Clean Water State Revolving Funds. Small and rural communities strive to ensure quality wastewater stays in compliance—this initiative provides them with the technical resources to do so.

Bill Language: \$27,500,000 shall be for grants under section 104(b)(8) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1254(b)(8)).

Report Language: The Agency is directed to issue awards on an annual basis to the most qualified and experienced non-profit organizations necessary to provide quality uninterrupted training and technical assistance. The Agency is directed to allocate funds to grantees within 180 days of enactment of this Act.

EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance Justification: Enact the FY2025 Senate reported level of \$27,500,000 for section 4103 of America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 in FY2025

EPA Clean Water Act Compliance Technical Assistance: This technical assistance authorization, section 4103, "Technical Assistance for Treatment Works," was included in America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, and signed into law by the President on October 23, 2018.

Small and rural communities have more difficulty affording public wastewater service due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. This challenge is compounded by the fact that rural communities have lower average median household incomes and often have higher rates of poverty. Likewise, rural communities have a much more challenging time complying with federal Clean Water Act permits and operating complex wastewater treatment systems due to the lack of technical resources and expertise in small communities. While most rural communities have fewer resources, they are regulated in the exact same manner as a large community - and often operating similarly complex treatment systems that are smaller in scale but no less sophisticated to operate and troubleshoot. Many small communities may only have one (or one part-time) operator with multiple duties (not just wastewater treatment) - while a large community may have a team of technical experts including engineers, chemists, and highly trained operators - all as part of their full-time staff.

Many small and rural communities are currently struggling to comply with the EPA sewer permits (i.e. federal National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits), experiencing issues with inflow and infiltration of their collection systems, meeting Clean Water Act ammonia standards, biochemical oxygen demand standards, new nutrient standards, stormwater regulations and changing permits due to implementation of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations.

This recent law provides direct on-site assistance to communities to support the efficient operation of their wastewater utilities and ensure compliance with all the federal regulations under the Clean Water Act. Funding and implementation will allow communities to comply with the federal Clean Water Act requirements, potentially save thousands of dollars, prevent the hiring of consultants to comply with the Clean Water Act and limit exposure to civil penalties. Instead of a "must" mandate from the federal government, this provision will provide small and rural communities with "how-to" guidance for cost-effective compliance with the federal government's Clean Water Act.

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2026 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **National Water and Wastewater Operator Apprenticeship Program**

Appropriations bill: Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee Chairman: TBD

Senate subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

House subcommittee Chairman: TBD

House subcommittee Ranking Member: TBD

Department: United States Department of Labor

Agency: Employment and Training Administration

Appropriations Account: Training and Employment Services

FY2026 President's budget request: TBD

**Apprenticeship Grant
Program Funding History**

FY2021	\$185,000,000
FY2022	\$235,000,000
FY2023	\$285,000,000
FY2024	\$285,000,000
FY2025	TBD

FY2026 request: \$20,000,000 set-aside within the Apprenticeship Grant Program

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) requests \$20,000,000 for a national water and wastewater operator apprenticeship program to be funded by the available resources within the Apprenticeship Grant Program account.

Bill Language: \$20,000,000 shall be for national water and wastewater operator industry workforce training through apprenticeship programs registered with the Office of Apprenticeship of the Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor or a State apprenticeship agency recognized by the Office of Apprenticeship pursuant to the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the "National Apprenticeship Act"; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

Report Language: The Committee directs the Secretary to make \$20,000,000 in grant funding available for a nonprofit organization working with community water systems to establish, implement, expand, and administer registered apprenticeship programs consistent with the National Guideline Standards of Apprenticeship for Water and Wastewater System Operations Specialists to address nationwide shortages of qualified drinking water and wastewater operators, especially in rural America.

DOL Rural Water Workforce Initiative Justification: Provide the FY2025 House reported level of \$20,000,000 for a national water and wastewater operator apprenticeship program.

NRWA, State Rural Water Associations, USDA, DOL, EPA, and local rural water utilities are collaborating successfully to establish the first nationally recognized Registered Apprenticeship Program for water and wastewater system operators, while creating jobs in rural America. In July 2024, NRWA achieved a significant milestone by securing \$7,631,873 in DOL competitive grant funding to support the development and expansion of these vital rural water apprenticeships. As of January 2025, 34 State Rural Water Associations have completed the rigorous process of obtaining federally approved Registered Apprenticeship Programs and are now attracting, training, and retaining the next generation water workforce with over 573 apprentices enrolled and over 337 have completed their apprenticeship as of December 31, 2024.

To bolster this effective initiative, Congress “urged” the Secretary of Labor to make funding available for the NRWA Registered Apprenticeship Program in the FY2024 Further Consolidated Appropriations Act and the FY2025 DOL House Appropriations report includes a set-aside directing the Secretary of Labor to invest \$20 million:

The Committee directs DOL to make \$20,000,000 in grant funding available to establish, implement, expand, and administer registered apprenticeship programs consistent with the National Guideline Standards of Apprenticeship for Water and Wastewater System Operations Specialists to address nationwide shortages of qualified drinking water and wastewater operators, especially in rural America. (page 13)

To continue the growing, successful NRWA Apprenticeship Program, we also request a \$290 million funding level for the Apprenticeship Grant Program account, the same as the Senate’s FY2025 reported level, and \$20,000,000 for a national water and wastewater operator apprenticeship program to be funded by the available resources within that account.

Safe and effective water utility management is vital to rural America and the nation. There are currently over 50,000 community water supplies in the country, 91% serve populations of 10,000 or less. Employment data indicates up to 50% of this workforce will leave the water industry within the next 10 years. A vast majority of community water systems have been unable to attract, train and retain the next generation workforce due to the lack of an identifiable career path coupled with low salary levels and population density. Rural water utilities need a pipeline of skilled workers to ensure clean and safe water for the public and to maintain the water infrastructure necessary to keep service areas economically viable. These operators serve as public health officials and are often the only person responsible for complying with all the applicable federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act regulations and for supplying the small community with safe drinking water and sanitation every second of every day. Water and wastewater systems will be empowered to leverage workforce development activities including an identifiable career path and a modern, systematic apprenticeship model with this funding for the first time.

Wisconsin Rural Water Association

Impact on Wisconsin by Congressional Districts

DISTRICT 1

Legend:
Blue - Waterworks Assistance
Green - Energy Efficiency
Yellow - EPA Water Case Studies
Teal/Aqua – Source Water Assistance
Light Brown – Wastewater Assistance

Contact Date	System Name	System Contact	Position	System Connections	Total Contact Time	Savings to System
4/22/24	Clinton Waterworks	Roger Johnson	Public Works Director	581 W / 581 WW	1.0 hr.	\$1,500
<p>Notes: Roger Johnson and Operations Specialist Mike Kahl contacted WRWA Circuit Rider Annetta Von Rueden concerning a substantial water loss which had been unresolved for over two years. The utility estimated the water loss was two million gallons per month. Annetta brought leak detection equipment on-site and demonstrated the proper method of operation to Mike. Two weeks later, Annetta returned for a follow-up visit to check the progress on locating the leak. Mike had been unsuccessful and informed her that a professional leak detecting company was contracted and performed a system wide audit with no success. Annetta listened at the well source on the discharge piping with the leak detector to see if any water was back feeding through the check valve, with no sound detected. They suspected it was a billing error rather than a leak. All residential meters are measured in hundreds of gallons and all industrial accounts are measured in thousands of gallons. Mike consulted the clerk regarding the billing methods and making the necessary corrections. WRWA saved Clinton \$1,500 in the use of leak detection equipment and engineering firm fees.</p>						
9/24/24	Clinton Waterworks	Mike Kahl	Water Operations Specialist	581 W / 581 WW	2.75 hrs.	\$1,200 annually
<p>Notes: Clinton Water Utility contacted WRWA for assistance in locating a leak. WRWA Circuit Rider Annetta Von Rueden went to Clinton Water Utility to listen for the leak. The leak was narrowed down to a section of old water distribution pipe. Annetta demonstrated to Mike Kahl how to correlate the leak with WRWA's leak correlator and the leak was found. It was discovered there was a crack on the pipe with an estimated loss of 70 - 80 thousand gallons per day. WRWA saved the water utility \$1,200 in leak correlation and significant recovery of water resources.</p>						

BROWNS LAKE MOBILE HOME COURT, LLC

840 West Ryan Road
P. O. Box 307
Oak Creek, WI 53154

414-764-4040
kstyza@gmail.com

May 28, 2024

To whom it may concern,

Over 25 years ago, I first attended in-person classes with Kelly Thomas of WRWA to earn my Small Water System (OTM/NN) Operator Certification. I have learned a great deal through the years while renewing my Certification with the in-person renewal classes conducted by Kelly Thomas.

Kelly has diligently sent email reminders to take my Bacti Samples, along with the other DNR required annual tests. Kelly has made himself available to answer questions regarding my water system involving my two wells, and I value his long-term, personal knowledge of our court's system. Kelly Thomas has visited my court, and he has come to my office offering to help me with issues that might come up with my water system. Personal service goes a long way in helping me to understand issues that might arise, and to provide safe drinking water.

Since 2020, when Covid stopped in-person classes, I felt disconnected from this effective learning experience with Virtual classes. I took a few Virtual classes with the Moraine Park Technical College, but the instructors don't seem to have the same hands-on experience with the water systems in mobile home courts. The Moraine Park Technical College instructors have not reached out to me since attending their classes.

Last week, I attended the in-person WRWA class in North Fond du Lac, on "Operator Responsibilities & Sanitary Surveys" with Kelly Thomas as my instructor. The other attendees all stated that they missed attending Kelly's classes because the Moraine Park courses were like listening to someone read straight out of a textbook. Kelly's class allowed us to interact with one another, and even though I was the only attendee who had a mobile home court water system, I learned from the other attendees that we have some common concerns or issues. Kelly addressed each one of our questions from first-hand knowledge.

Last year, my nephew attended an on-line course to earn his Small Water System (OTM/NN) Operator Certification. He took his exam in a real estate office with one other person. The realtors were talking about unrelated real estate issues while they were trying to concentrate on taking the exam.

My nephew waited a week for his results before reaching out to PSI, the exam scheduler, for help. PSI told him that he should have received on-screen results and an e-mail score report printed out at the test center, but this never happened.

I reached out to Kelly Thomas at WRWA for help. Kelly checked on the results and notified me that he had failed the first exam. My nephew repeated the Virtual course for a second time, and he hopes to pass the exam on June 6th, 2024. If he does not pass the exam in June, he will then attend Kelly's WRWA in-person course on August 8th in Janesville, WI.

Last week, Kelly came to our office to meet with me to see if I needed any help with my water system, and my nephew had an opportunity to meet him. My nephew and I both appreciate having someone so dedicated to making sure that we are providing safe water systems.

I highly recommend having WRWA be your preferred Water System course provider.

Thank you,



Catherine Styza

Member/Browns Lake Mobile Home Court LLC