Washington, DC – Today, Representative Earl Blumenauer (OR-03) introduced the bipartisan Water Protection and Reinvestment Trust Fund Act of 2013, along with Representatives Tim Bishop (NY-01), John Duncan (TN-02), Donna F. Edwards (MD-04) Richard Hanna (NY-22), Jim Moran (VA-08), Tom Petri (WI-06), and Ed Whitfield (KY-01). This bill would provide a small, deficit-neutral, protected source of revenue to help states replace, repair, and rehabilitate critical wastewater treatment facilities by creating a voluntary labeling and contributory system to which businesses that rely on a clean water source could opt-in.

While it would take over $9.3 billion a year to maintain a clean-water infrastructure, funding has averaged just over $1.25 billion a year since 2000. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has given US wastewater infrastructure a grade of “D” in their most recent report card. Last year alone, American communities suffered more than 310,000 water main breaks and saw overflowing combined sewer systems, causing contamination, property damage, disruptions in the water supply, and massive traffic jams.

“Day by day, and year by year, our water infrastructure falls apart,” said Blumenauer. “This bill allows responsible businesses who are dependent on clean water and effective sewage, to voluntarily contribute to rebuild and renew the system. Over the long term, the bill will save consumers and local governments millions of dollars, while helping maintain and rebuild our clean water system.”

“A federal clean Water Trust Fund will leverage billions of public and private dollars to rebuild our nation’s water infrastructure and put thousands of Americans to work in the construction and wastewater-support sectors,” said Bishop, Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment. “Investing now in improvements to publicly-owned water infrastructure will save taxpayer dollars on the local level in the future by reducing long-term operation and maintenance costs and protecting public health. I thank Congressman Blumenauer for his leadership on this critical issue.”

“Every day, we see the health, safety, and economic effects of America’s crumbling water infrastructure,” said Edwards. “This legislation is a bipartisan effort to stem the tide. In my state of Maryland, we see the devastating effects of polluted runoff, flooding, and sewer overflows on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and other rivers across our country. We must act now to create a consistent revenue stream, develop this infrastructure, and partner with businesses to keep our water clean for working families now and in the future.”

“Maintenance demands on our clean water infrastructure have outpaced the funds available to pay for it for years,” said Moran. “This bill creates a voluntary, dedicated revenue stream to keep American communities drinking water safe for current and future generations.”
“We are potentially looking at billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities over the next few decades due to poor and crumbling water infrastructure,” said Petri. “This plan is a viable, long-term solution that will allow us to meet the needs of our nation’s pipe, drains, and sewers.”

“A modern, reliable infrastructure is vital for economic development,” stated Whitfield. “I’m pleased to be a part of this important legislation.”

Businesses could choose to place a small label on their products indicating their commitment to protecting America’s clean water. For each unit that displayed such a label, companies would contribute $0.03 to the Water Trust Fund. Most of these funds will be distributed as grants and loans through the existing Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund to provide loans to publicly owned treatment works for wastewater treatment construction. Twenty percent of the funds will support an innovative financing program based on the successful Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act.

“Everyone cares about clean water, but the reality is that the system to protect and maintain water isn’t free.” continued Blumenauer. “This bill doesn’t cost the taxpayers a cent, and yet allows businesses and the public to enjoy the benefits of a modern and fully functional water-infrastructure system. It’s a straightforward solution to the problem, and passing it swiftly into law would be a good way to show the American people we can move forward on bills that benefit everyone.”

Statements of Support:

“APWA is encouraged by Congressman Blumenauer’s efforts to address the infrastructure funding crisis facing wastewater utilities and we applaud Congressmen Blumenauer, Hanna, Duncan and Whitfield on identifying a workable solution to raising new money for wastewater utility investment.” – Peter B. King, Executive Director of the American Public Works Association.

“The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) applauds Representative Blumenauer and the bipartisan co-sponsors of this bill - which seeks voluntary contributions to a dedicated trust fund to benefit clean and safe water across the country. This bill’s introduction is a key step toward ensuring that the federal government recommit to an enduring partnership with our states and municipalities in meeting the nation's growing clean water infrastructure needs, and we urge Congress to swiftly enact this legislation.” – Ken Kirk, Executive Director of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies

“We need to step up the nation’s commitment to water infrastructure, which is why this legislation is so important. Congress long ago recognized that the needs of our surface transportation and aviation systems were critical enough to warrant tax revenues dedicated to their maintenance and enhancement. We need to take the next logical step and extend this approach to addressing the enormous backlog of water infrastructure needs throughout the country. ACEC strongly supports the Water Protection and Reinvestment Act.” – Dave Raymond, President and CEO, American Council of Engineering Companies

"The United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters support the Water Protection and Reinvestment Act because our nation’s aging water systems—the pipes, treatment plants and storage tanks that deliver safe, clean water to our homes and businesses—are reaching a tipping point and must be replaced."
Investments in water infrastructure will promote American innovation and competitiveness, create thousands of jobs in construction and manufacturing sectors, and ensure our communities have access to safe and reliable water systems.” – William P. Hite, General President, United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters of the United States, Canada and Australia

“The innovative approaches outlined in Congressman Blumenauer’s bill will help us to insure a sustainable clean water future.” – Kevin Shafer, Executive Director, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

"The International Union of Operating Engineers believe that the Water Trust Fund legislation introduced today by Congressmen Blumenauer is a national imperative and we will aggressively pursue its enactment into law. The bill’s comprehensive set of innovative financing mechanisms will deliver environmental and economic benefits for future generations, while also delivering immediate economic benefits for the nation by creating thousands of family wage jobs in the hard-hit construction sector soon after its passage. The IUOE appreciates Congressman Blumenauer's focus and hard work on legislation that seriously begins to address the dramatic needs of America’s wastewater infrastructure. Thank you for your leadership." – James T. Callahan, General President, International Union of Operating Engineers

“This bipartisan measure will provide the resources needed to maintain, improve and expand clean water systems across the country,” said, the chief executive officer of the “Establishing this fund will help provide additional funding municipalities need to plan and finance upgrades to our increasingly aging water systems.” – Stephen E. Sandherr, CEO, Associated General Contractors of America.

“Our nation is facing a clean water infrastructure funding crisis - EPA, GAO and WIN have all projected annual shortfalls in funding for clean water infrastructure in access of $20 B for the foreseeable future. Congressman Blumenauer’s legislation is a thoughtful approach to funding America’s critical water infrastructure that has earned broad bipartisan support on the Hill and the unwavering support of municipal, construction, labor, conservation and engineering organizations from across the country. – Water Infrastructure Network.

“By establishing a clean water trust fund, communities will be able to unlock potentially millions of dollars through the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund program and a new federal loan program for water infrastructure projects critical to our economy, the environment and the health and welfare of our communities. While municipal bonds help fund three-quarters of infrastructure projects built in the U.S., local governments continue to seek additional financing mechanisms. NLC applauds these leaders on their bipartisan effort to provide new and innovative mechanisms of funding and a reliable, long-term source of capital to meet the growing water infrastructure needs in our communities.” – Chris Coleman, President, National League of Cities and Mayor of Saint Paul, MN


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