



SUSTAINABLE Water Infrastructure

Get the Facts on Sustainable Water
Infrastructure & EPA's New Sustainability Policy

Sustainably managing our nation's water infrastructure is critical to protecting human health and the environment, as well as securing clean, safe water for the American public.

Yet, as aging drinking water, wastewater and stormwater systems require significant upgrade and repair, it is one of the biggest challenges facing the water sector. The investments made now in water sector infrastructure can have profound impacts on long-term community sustainability.

With input from federal, state and local stakeholders, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued the Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure Sustainability Policy as part of its efforts to promote sustainable infrastructure within the water sector. Recognizing that the first priority of water infrastructure is to protect public health and water quality, EPA will work with its partners to build upon existing efforts that support sustainable water infrastructure and community sustainability. This partnership will be built around the following areas:

- Promoting planning processes that support sustainability
- Encouraging community sustainability
- Promoting sustainable water and wastewater systems
- Targeting State Revolving Fund (SRF) assistance
- Measuring success

The complete Policy is available at <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain>.
Read on for answers to frequently asked questions on what the Policy means and how EPA is supporting ongoing initiatives in sustainable water infrastructure.



EPA's Sustainability Policy

Q: What are the overall goals of the Policy?

A: The Policy is the next step in EPA's ongoing efforts to change how the nation views, values and manages our water infrastructure. EPA and its partners seek to ensure that federal investments, policies and actions support sustainable water infrastructure to best support existing communities, enhance economic competitiveness and promote affordable neighborhoods.

The Policy addresses how more sustainable practices can be achieved on three interdependent levels:

- *Sustainable Water Infrastructure*—Robust and comprehensive planning processes should be adopted to pursue water infrastructure investments that are cost-effective over their life cycle, resource-efficient and consistent with community sustainability goals.
- *Sustainable Water Sector Systems*—Water sector systems should employ Effective Utility Management practices to build and maintain the technical, financial and managerial capacity necessary to ensure long-term sustainability.
- *Sustainable Communities*—Investments in various infrastructure sectors, such as housing, transportation and water, should be coordinated to best align with a community's goals for livability and sustainable growth.

Each of these levels supports the others. The effective management of water infrastructure is one of the main challenges faced by our water sector systems. Our water sector systems must also address a range of other challenges to ensure their operations and infrastructure are sustainable.

Q: What is EPA doing to achieve the goals outlined in the Policy?

A: EPA is working collaboratively with its federal, state and local partners to develop guidance, provide technical assistance and target federal state revolving fund capitalization funds and other relevant federal financial assistance to increase the sustainability of our water infrastructure.

The Policy continues to promote EPA's ongoing efforts of Effective Utility Management, energy and water conservation, asset management and capacity development, outlining specific implementation efforts to support sustainability of water infrastructure, water systems and communities. A full list of initial actions being pursued by EPA and its partners under the Policy can be found at <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/upload/Sustainability-Policy.pdf>.

Q: What does the Policy mean by infrastructure investment in “efficient and sustainable locations”?

A: The focus on supporting water infrastructure in more efficient and sustainable locations refers to the targeting of resources to specific areas within a community, based on cross-sector plans and goals for sustainability and growth.

EPA and its state and federal partners seek to target federal dollars, policies and actions to ensure that water infrastructure investments are being coordinated with investments in other sectors in order to best meet the sustainability needs of our communities.

Q: What does it mean to select infrastructure projects using a “fix-it-first” approach?

A: “Fix-it-first” refers to an investment approach that targets resources to support the repair, replacement and upgrade of existing infrastructure and facilitates residential, commercial and industrial development within the existing service footprint of the water sector utility.

The fix-it-first approach helps to revitalize communities by making infrastructure investments within existing built areas before investing in expansion into new areas. It maximizes the number of people served by that infrastructure and minimizes the amount of infrastructure that the ratepayers must support for the long term.

Q: How does the Policy affect the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Programs that fund drinking water and clean water infrastructure?

A: Through their SRF programs, states will continue to encourage a range of practices that support sustainable water infrastructure and overall system sustainability. EPA will work with states to encourage additional practices—including up-front planning, Effective Utility Management, asset management, integrated water resource management and energy management—to build a “pipeline” of sustainable projects eligible to receive federal SRF capitalization grant funding and to advance sustainable practices by systems throughout the water sector irrespective of SRF funding.

States will retain their roles as primary implementers of SRF programs with the flexibility to manage funds and support the directions set forth in the law and this Policy consistent with local conditions and challenges.

Please contact **James Horne, (202) 564-0571**, of the Office of Wastewater Management, Municipal Support Division, with any questions regarding the Policy.

