

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

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Rural Infrastructure Tour Fact Sheet:

President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Empowers the Department of the Interior to Deliver for Rural America

President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will deliver billions to rural communities across the country to create economic opportunity. Supporting Americans living in rural areas remains a top priority for the Biden Administration, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law delivers on the President’s promises to provide high-speed internet, safe roads and bridges, modern wastewater systems, clean drinking water, reliable and affordable electricity, and good-paying jobs in every small town and rural community. As part of this effort, the Biden Administration is also committed to working with communities to help them access federal resources and improving transparency and trust in the federal government.

The Department of the Interior will lead this effort focusing on water resilience, drought, and environmental remediation. This fact sheet provides information for rural communities to know all the available resources under the infrastructure law, where to apply, or how find more information.

Please route any questions to: OIEA@ios.doi.gov

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As rural communities continue to face the impacts of extreme weather events, the funding provided by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will be crucial to ensuring those communities have the resources they need to bolster climate resilience and protect natural areas. This is an historic down payment on ensuring that future generations have clean air, drinkable water, fertile soil, and an overall quality of life that is currently threatened by the worsening climate crisis.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law invests \$30.6 billion across Interior Department initiatives to benefit the communities and areas we directly serve. In rural communities across the country, this funding is dedicated to cleaning up legacy pollution, addressing the drought crisis, assisting with wildland fire management, restoring core habitats, and helping communities and ecosystems better prepare for extreme weather events.

Providing Clean, Reliable Water Service in Rural Communities

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contains \$8.3 billion in funding to support water resilience and drought mitigation. These efforts will support the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to sustained, inclusive engagement that aims to minimize the impacts of drought and develop a long-term plan to facilitate conservation and economic growth.

- **Rural Water Projects - \$1 billion.** The Bureau of Reclamation's Rural Water program helps establish and rebuild clean water infrastructure for underserved and rural populations, which will further the President's goal to ensure that everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds \$1 billion for rural water projects that have been authorized by an Act of Congress before July 1, 2021. These projects include the:
 - Eastern New Mexico Rural Water System
 - Fort Peck Reservation – Dry Prairie Rural Water System
 - Garrison Diversion Unit Municipal, Rural, & Industrial Program
 - Jicarilla Apache Rural Water System
 - Lewis and Clark Rural Water System
 - Musselshell-Judith Rural Water System
 - Rocky Boy's/North Central Montana Rural Water System

Explore additional projects by region on the [Bureau of Reclamation home page](#).

- **Drought Resilience Projects - \$1.66 billion.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes funding for communities to address drought across the West as well as greater water infrastructure throughout the country. Reclamation will be provided \$1.66 billion annually to support a range of infrastructure improvements for fiscal years 2022 through 2026. The FY 2022 spend plan allocations include:
 - \$210 million for construction of water storage, groundwater storage and conveyance project infrastructure.
 - \$160 million for [WaterSMART Grants](#) to support Reclamation efforts to work cooperatively with states, Tribes, and local entities to implement infrastructure investments to increase water supply.
 - \$100 million for aging infrastructure for major repairs and rehabilitation of facilities.
 - \$100 million for safety of dams to implement safety modifications of critical infrastructure.
 - \$50 million for the implementation of Colorado River Basin drought contingency plans to support the goal of reducing the risk of Lake Mead and Lake Powell reaching critically low water levels.
 - \$18 million for WaterSMART's Cooperative Watershed Management Program for watershed planning and restoration projects for watershed groups.

- \$8.5 million for Colorado River Basin Endangered Species Recovery and Conservation Programs.
- **Indian Water Rights Settlements - \$2.5 billion.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law invests more than \$13 billion directly in Tribal communities across the country and makes Tribal communities eligible for billions more in much-needed investments. That includes \$2.5 billion to implement the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund, which will help deliver long-promised water resources to Tribes, certainty to all their non-Indian neighbors, and a solid foundation for future economic development for entire communities dependent on common water resources.

Addressing Legacy Pollution

Abandoned mine lands and orphaned oil and gas wells are polluting backyards, water supplies, recreation areas, and public spaces across the country. The historic investments to clean up these hazardous sites will create good-paying, union jobs, catalyze economic growth and revitalization, reduce dangerous methane leaks, and eliminate dangerous conditions. The funding is split into two main programs:

- **Orphaned Wells - \$4.7 billion.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$4.7 billion to plug orphaned oil and gas wells that dot the American landscape, which release methane and cause pollution. Cleaning up these wells will create good-paying jobs in rural communities across the country. Tribes are eligible for additional funding under a separate \$150 million program. Grants to States are available through [three separate programs](#):
 - **Initial Grants:** Up to \$5 million or \$25 million to each qualifying state that applies. (Flexible application deadline for small grants; May 14, 2022 application deadline for large grants.)
 - **Formula Grants:** \$2 billion in [total funding available](#) to states that submitted a Notice of Intent to the Department of the Interior by December 30, 2021.
 - **Performance Grants:** \$1.5 billion in discretionary grants to states that increase their own spending on well plugging, remediation, and reclamation, or improve the regulation of oil and gas wells within the state.
- **Abandoned Mine Land (AML) grants - \$11.3 billion.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$11.3 billion over 15 years to reclaim abandoned mine lands, including closing mine shafts, reclaiming and transforming mine sites, and addressing water pollution. This will put thousands of people to work eliminating health and safety hazards and revitalizing their communities. The grant formulas are based on historical coal production. States will receive additional guidance on how to apply for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law AML grants in the near future.

Promoting Restored and Resilient Ecosystems

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a \$1.5 billion investment in **wildfire resilience** to better prepare communities and ecosystems against the threat of wildland fire. These historic investments will focus on forest restoration, hazardous fuels management and post-wildfire restoration activities across America's national parks, forests, and grasslands, as well as investments in our federal firefighters.

- **Hazardous Fuels and Burned Area Rehabilitation Programs - \$900 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides nearly \$900 million to the Interior Department for hazardous fuels treatments, including prescribed fire, mechanical thinning and other treatments, to improve the resiliency of federal and Tribal lands and safeguard people, communities, and resources from the threat of wildfires. The law also provides \$50 million to train staff, non-federal firefighters and Native Village fire crews for wildland firefighting and for increasing the pace and scale of vegetation treatments, including training on how to prepare and implement large-scale landscape treatments. Additionally, \$325 is available to undertake post-wildfire restoration on burned lands. Funding for these activities will be allocated to Interior Department bureaus for implementation of high priority projects on federal and Tribal lands and to implement training opportunities for staff and non-federal and Tribal partners.
- **Wildland Firefighter Workforce Reforms - \$120 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$120 million to the Interior Department to address firefighter workforce reforms, including establishing a wildland firefighter occupational series; improving firefighter pay; converting seasonal firefighters to full-time permanent status; and developing programs that address firefighter mental health and strategies to minimize line-of-duty environmental hazards. Collaboration with the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Agriculture is ongoing to address both short- and long-term workforce reforms.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law authorizes a \$1.4 billion investment in **ecosystem restoration** and the resilience of America's lands, including funding for stewardship contracts, ecosystems restoration projects, invasive species detection and prevention, and native vegetation restoration efforts.

- **Ecosystem Restoration Program - \$905 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$905 million for the Ecosystem Restoration Program, which supports strategic and impactful on-the-ground restoration efforts to combat drought, elevated wildland fire and flood risk among other exigent conservation challenges. The Interior Department is coordinating with the Department of Agriculture to ensure projects can: 1) build climate adaptation and resilience for ecosystems and communities; 2) restore or improve core habitats and connectivity; and 3) build and leverage activities and partnerships for restoration at scale. The Interior Department recognizes that greater restoration impact can be achieved by investing in landscape scale strategies and

building partnership capacity with state, local, Tribal, territorial and other partners to achieve shared conservation goals. This goal includes investing in capacity and priorities for underserved communities as well as co-stewardship opportunities with Tribal partners, guided by the acknowledgement and use of standards of practice of ethical partnership activities. Information on how to apply for Ecosystem Restoration Program funding will be shared in the near future.

- **National Fish Passage Program - \$200 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a \$200 million investment in the National Fish Passage Program, which supports aquatic ecosystem restoration projects to restore fish passage and aquatic connectivity by removing or bypassing barriers. In addition to providing benefits for fish and aquatic species, the Program's work to restore degraded and fragmented aquatic habitats decreases public safety hazards and improves infrastructure resilience by reducing flood risks, removing obsolete dams, and improving water delivery for local agriculture irrigation districts. This important work also creates construction, engineering, and other jobs, stimulating the local economy. More information is available on the [Fish and Wildlife Service's website](#).
- **Klamath Basin - \$162 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a \$162 million investment in the restoration of the Klamath Basin. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now [soliciting proposals](#) for [restoration activities](#) in the Klamath Basin of Southern Oregon and Northern California from Tribes, local and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other conservation partners who are committed to finding long-term, collaborative solutions for the basin and its communities. Proposals must demonstrate how the proposed restoration will improve conditions and achieve habitat restoration for waterfowl and/or native fish and wildlife species, and other aquatic species throughout the Klamath Basin. Proposals are due May 8, 2022.
- **Delaware River - \$26 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$26 million to fund conservation in the Delaware River watershed. The [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#) (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to conserve, restore, and connect people with fish and wildlife habitat in the Delaware River watershed. The Delaware River Program will award matching grants of \$75,000 to \$1,500,000 each to conserve, restore and protect habitats on public and private land that contribute to the overall health of the Delaware River watershed—as well as benefit the quality of life and economic vitality of the communities in the Delaware River watershed.
- **Sagebrush Steppe - \$50 million.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$50 million for restoration in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, which primarily affects rural communities. These funding opportunities are under development, and municipalities should work with their local FWS offices to determine how to propose projects.