



Failing Water Infrastructure Threatens U.S. Economy

Clean Water is Good for Business

America is fortunate to have thousands of municipal water systems to provide reliable, plentiful clean drinking water and sanitary waste disposal. But most of this water infrastructure is deteriorating badly. Ranging from several decades to over a century old, our water infrastructure suffers from neglect and age and urgently needs repair and replacement. In 2017, The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) issued an infrastructure report card that gave the U.S. drinking water infrastructure a “D” grade for overall quality. Nationwide, an estimated 240,000 water main breaks occur every year.

To maintain U.S. drinking water service at current levels requires replacing pipes that are already past, or at, their useful lives, and expanding systems to support growing populations. The American Water Works Association says completing these updates will require an estimated \$1 trillion in infrastructure investments over the next 25 years.

Business Survival as well as Public Health Depends on Saving America’s Water Infrastructure Now.

Water infrastructure is as vital to business as it is to human health. American businesses rely on municipal water systems for food production, manufacturing, energy production, and much more. Even companies that do not directly rely on clean water infrastructure to create their products need it to fulfill their day-to-day functions. Faulty infrastructure inflicts disruptions on business operations, including utility service interruptions, polluted drinking water, and higher water bills.

Private businesses and government leaders can both take common-sense action to restore America’s safe, reliable water infrastructure. We can:

THE HARD FACTS

Investing in our water infrastructure cannot be delayed any longer. The American Society of Civil Engineers says that the fallout from our water infrastructure’s degradation will result in:

- \$147 billion in increased costs to businesses due to higher water rates
- 700,000 jobs lost due to the resulting squeeze on company budgets
- \$416 billion in lost GDP due to increased costs and the loss of worker productivity.

ASCE says these losses will occur by the year 2020.

This deterioration — and resulting costs — will only get worse the longer we delay.

• **Increase Investment in Watershed Management.**

The Clean Water Act requires active, local stormwater management for each watershed (shallow, bowl-like landforms around rivers and other water bodies, with higher points from which water is shed after rainfall or snowmelt). Management demands technical expertise on methodologies to prevent contamination and other damage due to the confluence of increased flooding and increased areas covered in non-permeable surfaces. Technical scientists, environmental engineers and construction teams are all needed for a successful watershed project, but many states do not have enough of these specialists. Investment in human resources to build efficient water infrastructure is essential and overdue.



- **Increase Clean Water Grants to States.** The Clean Water State Revolving Fund programs are state-federal partnerships that provide low-interest loans for water infrastructure projects. Grants must be significantly increased to rebuild and modernize water delivery infrastructure, wastewater and water reuse technologies and coastal water infrastructure.

These improvements will spur investment and support regional businesses, especially those that use surface-water sources daily.

- **Expand Grant Eligibility and Improve Transparency:** Clean Water State Revolving Fund administrators must broaden

eligibility for financing water infrastructure loans and make that process transparent so that low-interest infrastructure loans will be distributed fairly among all to impacted communities throughout each state.

- **Restore Natural Infrastructure:** Natural water infrastructure such as mangroves and floodplains provide filtering and flood control at extremely low cost. Obstructing these areas prevents efficient floodwater absorption, requiring more construction that further disrupts floodplains. Public initiatives that restore natural floodplains or incorporate them into man-made infrastructure will improve water quality and control future infrastructure costs. ★



AMERICAN
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COUNCIL

The American Sustainable Business Council is a growing coalition of business organizations and companies committed to advancing market solutions and policies to support a sustainable economy. ASBC and its organizational members represent more than 250,000 businesses and more than 325,000 business leaders across the U.S.

To take action on clean water issues, please visit asbcouncil.org