



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

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EPA Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Grant to Southwest Environmental Finance Center at Univ. of New Mexico to Help Communities Access Funds for Infrastructure Projects

DALLAS, TEXAS (July 25, 2023) – At a ceremony yesterday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded a grant of \$4 million to the Southwest Environmental Finance Center at the University of New Mexico. The grant is the first part of a total of \$10 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to be awarded over five years. The center will use the grant to help small, disadvantaged communities build capacity to develop, maintain and operate water infrastructure. U.S. Representatives Melanie Stansbury and Teresa Leger Fernandez, staff from Senators Martin Heinrich’s and Ben Ray Lujan’s and Representative Gabe Vasquez’s offices, and University of New Mexico officials also participated in the ceremony.

“Access to clean and safe water is a human right that should be afforded to every community—no matter the size or income level. Since September 2022, my Region delivered \$26.73 million to New Mexico to assist communities build and maintain their water infrastructure. The Southwest Environmental Finance Center is a key partner in delivering this necessity to families across New Mexico,” **said Regional Administrator Dr. Earthea Nance**. “To date, EPA has delivered more than \$438 million in investments to water infrastructure across the Region and is proud to make these Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds available to serve the people who need it most as part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s historic Investing in America priorities.”

"Agua es vida – water is life. Investing in our water infrastructure for access to safe and clean drinking water is critical. I’m proud to welcome \$4 million to the University of New Mexico’s South West Finance Center to build water infrastructure in underserved communities in our state," **said Senator Ben Ray Luján (NM)**. "Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this project is another step toward sustaining our water systems."

“Passing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was big, but delivering the major investments that legislation unlocked is huge. These funds for the Southwest Environmental Finance Center will help develop new tools to provide clean drinking water to communities across New Mexico – tools we urgently need as the climate crisis continues to accelerate drought and aridification,” **said Senator Martin Heinrich (NM)**.

“I’m thrilled to celebrate millions of dollars in grant funding awarded to the Southwest Environmental Finance Center,” **said Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury (NM-1)**. “This funding is crucial to helping ensure New Mexicans across the state have access to clean water and a brighter future. I cannot wait to see the lasting impacts this grant will have for future generations of New Mexicans.”

“This \$10 million grant recognizes the urgency of addressing these concerns and provides technical assistance to help communities develop and submit project proposals,” **said Congressman Gave Vasquez (NM-2)**. “The Environmental Finance Centers, including the one at UNM, will play a vital role in ensuring that states, Tribes, local governments, and NGOs have the support they need to implement sustainable and impactful projects to uplift our underserved communities.”

“The reality is many rural communities don’t have the capacity or matching funds to apply for the competitive funding opportunities that we created last Congress. Our congressional job doesn’t end when we pass the bill, our job is to work with the Biden Administration, and our State leaders to unlock competitive federal funding opportunities for rural, smaller communities. These historic investments will build stronger economies and expand the middle class in New Mexico from Gallup and Farmington to Raton, Clovis, Roswell, and everywhere in between” **said Congresswoman Leger Fernandez (NM-3)**.

"UNM recognizes the critical importance of water to our state and our nation, and we are proud to be contributing to the positive legacy this investment will produce, not only in New Mexico, but across the country," **UNM Vice President for Research Ellen Fisher said**. "This grant will allow our researchers at Southwest Environmental Finance Center the opportunity to enhance not only our knowledge and experiences in the realm of water, but also to engage and enable others in the communities around us, ultimately contributing to their knowledge and knowhow around water-related experiences."

The Southwest Environmental Finance Center is one of 29 similar organizations around the country selected for this funding. The selectees will deliver targeted technical assistance to local governments, states, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations to protect public health, safeguard the environment, and advance environmental justice. Thanks to President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the grants will target underserved communities that have historically struggled to access federal funding receive the support they need to access resources for water infrastructure improvements.

EPA will award up to \$150 million in grants to EFCs over the next five years, once all legal and administrative requirements are satisfied. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$98 million of the total investment through EPA’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF), with the remainder of funds coming from EPA appropriations.

About the Environmental Finance Centers Grant Program

Many communities with significant pollution challenges and infrastructure needs have not been able to access federal funding and financing programs to address these concerns. EPA recognizes that existing environmental gains cannot be preserved, nor further progress achieved, unless states, Tribes, and local governments, and non-governmental organizations have the resources to develop and sustain environmental projects.

Through the EFC grant program, technical assistance providers will help communities develop and submit project proposals, including State Revolving Fund (SRF) applications for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding and greenhouse gas reduction projects through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. EFCs will support underserved communities with technical assistance to identify sustainable infrastructure solutions. These entities will provide states, Tribes, and local governments or water systems with technical assistance services to advance equitable health and environmental protections.