

“Shovel Ready” Clean Water Projects Coming to Maryland

Maryland, with the leadership of our talented Congressional delegation, tracked every step in the development of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Just days after President Obama signed the ARRA, the Department of Environment revisited our list of unfunded projects and put out the word to towns and counties across the State about the funding coming to Maryland. Did we ever get a response! The requests outpaced available funding by about 30 to 1—MDE received over \$3.7 billion in requests for everything from wastewater treatment plant upgrades, water and sewer pipe repairs, drinking water improvements, and stormwater runoff controls and stream restoration. With approval from the Environmental Protection Agency, Maryland will award \$119.2 million in funding for these projects.

First, many thanks to each of the many municipalities and organizations that proposed over 600 worthy projects for funding. The applications, many developed on short notice, represented not only hard work but also provided a salient picture of the significant infrastructure needs we have across the State.

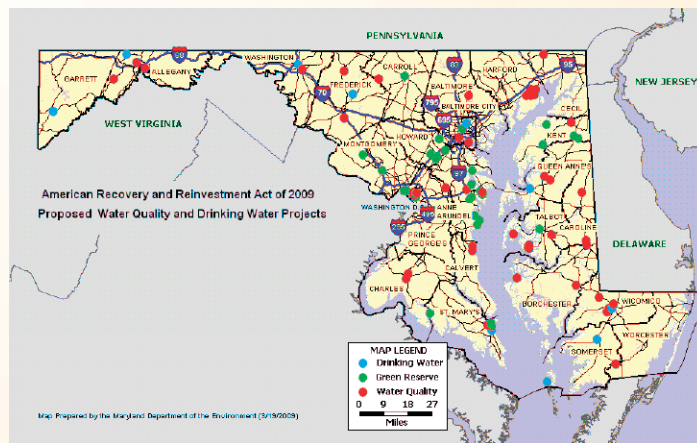
Last Friday, Governor O’Malley announced 95 proposed projects across Maryland that will boost our clean water infrastructure. From emergency repairs to Savage River Dam in Allegany County, to sewer pipe

repairs in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, to the Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade in Baltimore, to sewer projects on the Eastern Shore, the list spells good news for Marylanders and the Chesapeake Bay. Projects to restore streams and reduce polluted stormwater runoff, to create “green streets” and roof gardens, to reuse water, to install solar panels—each project, and the job opportunities created, will make a real difference to communities across Maryland during difficult economic times.

ARRA funding requires that projects be “shovel ready,” meaning construction must begin by the end of 2009. At least half of the funding must be provided as grants, the rest as 0 or 1 percent low interest loans, and 20 percent of the funding must be used for “green infrastructure.” MDE ranked all projects by existing criteria rating the environmental and health benefits, and, following existing Water Quality and Drinking Water program criteria, directed grants to green projects and projects in disadvantaged communities and the State’s Environmental Benefits Districts. We also wanted to ensure that every county in the State would benefit. To meet these criteria and ensure the funding would go as far as possible, funding was limited to a maximum of \$6 million per applicant, with the exception of projects needed to correct an emergency or to meet the 20 percent green reserve.

While many, many worthy proposals can't be funded this time, the applications have not been in vain. This week, I met with other environmental agency directors from across the Country and their stories were similar—demand far exceeding available funding in their states. We also heard that Congress is very interested in this demand and, if there is another stimulus package, based on the experience to date, the vast scale of requests will make it very likely that water, sewer, and green infrastructure projects will get greater attention in upcoming discussions about potential additional stimulus funding, federal statutory reauthorizations and federal budgets.

The full list of proposed projects, submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency for approval, is here:



http://www.mde.state.md.us/Programs/WaterPrograms/Water_Quality_Finance/FedStimulusProposedProjects.asp

For a complete picture of ARRA funding in Maryland across all sectors, please visit:
<http://statestat.maryland.gov/recovery.asp>

Over the coming months, as each of these 95 projects transforms from an entry line on a spreadsheet to a project in the ground for a cleaner and “greener” Maryland, we’ll be tracking just how the money was spent and how many jobs were created.



Sincerely,

Shari T. Wilson
Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment