



Ensure quick turnaround of grant projects

Provide new hires needed to review and permit projects funded by new Public Facilities Authority grant dollars.

What's the issue?

\$167 million in new bonding money has been proposed for existing Public Facilities Authority (PFA) grant programs, to fund municipal water infrastructure improvement projects. MPCA staff are needed to review and approve projects funded by the grants, to provide timely turnaround on grant proposals.

What local officials are saying

In the 2015 Water Infrastructure Listening Sessions, attendees expressed concerns about the cost of replacing old water infrastructure and upgrading the level of wastewater treatment to meet new water quality standards. Additionally, debt service and tax base issues make grants, not loans, the best funding option for many communities. Debt service can be 25% to 44% of a community's annual water-department budget. Even low-interest loans are not always helpful, especially for smaller towns. Listening session attendees asked that we provide more grants, and make them easier to obtain.

What we're proposing

To review and approve new infrastructure projects undertaken by the PFA grantees, the MPCA will hire and train three new staff:

- A permit writer to review permit applications, work out the construction timing with the municipality, write permits, complete public noticing, respond to public comments, and process final permit issuances
- An effluent limits specialist to develop limits for the permit that will protect downstream waters
- An engineer to approve project construction documents and give reasonable assurance that the project will comply with permit conditions

How will it help

With sufficient staff resources to process permit requests, new water infrastructure projects can proceed on time and municipalities can meet water quality goals. Until these projects are completed, benefits such as eliminating overflows of inadequately treated sewage, or reducing pollutants in wastewater treatment discharges will be on hold.

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