

Water Environment Research Foundation Awarded Multimillion-Dollar EPA Cooperative Agreement

Funds will evaluate new technologies that address the nation's aging water and wastewater infrastructure

(ALEXANDRIA, VA) 1/6/2010 - The Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF) will receive \$10 million in U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funds to evaluate new technologies that will help utilities cope with aging and failing water and wastewater systems. As the recipient of this cooperative agreement, WERF will administer \$6.25 million to address wastewater and stormwater infrastructure research and will coordinate with the Water Research Foundation to administer \$3.75 million to address aging drinking water systems. These funds will be further leveraged by a 33.3% cost share to be provided by the investigators.

Funding for the research is through EPA's Aging Water Infrastructure Research Program, a research agenda that supports efforts to put the nation's aging infrastructure on a pathway toward sustainability.

"The success of EPA's program depends on stakeholder involvement," said Sally Gutierrez, director of EPA's National Risk Management Research Laboratory. "Sharing information and tools, and working together toward the long-term stewardship of our water infrastructure will put us at the forefront of addressing our nation's critical need for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure research."

Research efforts initiated under the cooperative agreement will examine innovative tools and procedures to cost-effectively improve the maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement of the aging sewer lines, water mains, and other components that constitute our water and wastewater infrastructure. Research efforts will focus on four key areas:

- condition assessment for water and wastewater conveyance systems
- system rehabilitation for water and wastewater conveyance systems
- advanced design and engineering concepts
- innovative treatment technologies for wastewater, stormwater, water reuse, and drinking water

"This research agreement comes at a crucial time for water and wastewater utilities," said Glenn Reinhardt, executive director of the Water Environment Research Foundation. "For decades, cities and towns across the country have managed the remarkable feat of keeping fees low while facing an aging infrastructure and often significant increases in population. The innovative tools and cost-effective solutions that will be developed through this research should provide some welcomed assistance in their ongoing efforts to serve the public and improve water quality."

Sustainable Water Infrastructure

The development of this research program stems from EPA's Sustainable Water Infrastructure Initiative. This initiative seeks to promote better use of resources, increase the sustainability of our water infrastructure, and reduce the gap between the projected need for infrastructure funds and the actual funding.

"Much of our water infrastructure is approaching the end of its useful life. Citizens are usually not aware of the poor condition of these systems because they are mostly underground," said Thomas Speth, director of the National Risk Management Research Laboratory's Water Supply and Water Resources Division. "Working cooperatively with the water utility industry and researchers from within EPA and universities will help identify a new generation of technologies to determine the condition of the pipes, improve rehabilitation techniques, and optimize replacement schedules. The overall goal is to reduce the cost to the nation's cities."

EPA projects a funding gap of \$220 billion funding over the next 20 years if utilities and municipalities don't increase their investments in water and wastewater infrastructure. By better pricing and managing water use, as well as by implementing new technologies, that gap may be lessened.

The Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF), a nonprofit organization, manages independent scientific research that leads to cost-effective responses to water quality concerns affecting the environment and human health. Since 1989, WERF has addressed issues in wastewater treatment, water reclamation and reuse, biosolids and sludge, stormwater management, water quality and, more recently, climate change. For more information, visit www.werf.org