

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFICIENCY (WISE) ACT (H.R. 2921)

Background

The United States Environmental Protection Agency administers the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) to provide states with low-cost financing to design, plan, build, or update water infrastructure like municipal wastewater facilities, nonpoint source pollution control, decentralized wastewater treatment systems, stormwater management and mitigation, estuary protection, and water reuse.

Traditionally, gray stormwater infrastructure (e.g., pipes, tanks, pumps, etc.) is designed to move stormwater away from the built environment. Whereas green infrastructure or nature-based solutions reduce the quantity and treat stormwater on site, while delivering many other environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Nature-based solutions like rain gardens, green roofs, detention ponds, bioswales, and permeable pavements have been proven to effectively manage stormwater and improve water quality by filtering pollutants. According to the Congressional Research Service, these techniques can be built for 5-30 percent less and maintained for 25 percent less than gray infrastructure.

Recognizing the benefits of green infrastructure, in 2009 Congress passed funding legislation that included language to allow communities to implement nature-based solutions for water management projects using CWSRF loans. This Green Project Reserve (GPR) has been highly successful but has not been permanently authorized and is subject to annual actions of appropriators and Congress.

Extreme heat is causing frequent and intense rainfall leading to severe flooding, property damage, human health concerns, biodiversity loss, and more. Landscape architects plan and design nature-based systems that reduce the impacts of flooding, contain the movement of pollutants and other debris, help infiltrate stormwater on-site, and integrate these solutions seamlessly into our communities.

The CWSRF is one of the most-accessed federal funding sources for landscape architects to plan and design successful water infrastructure projects for communities nationwide.

Solution

Increased investments in the GPR are needed to ensure communities fully utilize the CWSRF and implement cost-effective nature-based solutions. To help communities fully realize the benefits of nature-based solutions to address their water management needs, Representative Nikema Williams (GA) introduced H.R. 2921, the Water Infrastructure Sustainability and Efficiency (WISE) Act, on April 26, 2023.

The WISE Act would increase CWSRF investments for nature-based solutions projects from 10 to 20 percent, **without spending any new money**. Increasing the GPR would help landscape architects continue to plan and design water and stormwater management projects using nature-based solutions on many scales, including at the site, neighborhood, watershed, and regional scales.

Request

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) urges Congress to act so communities nationwide may continue to realize the benefits of nature-based solutions for water management. We ask that you cosponsor the WISE Act (H.R. 2921), and work to introduce companion legislation in the U.S. Senate.

For additional information or to cosponsor the WISE Act, please contact Matt Alexis at matt.alexis@mail.house.gov in the office of Congresswoman Nikema Williams (GA).