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Clean Water Program Earns EPA Infrastructure Loan Invite

Local joint-municipality effort aims to upgrade and modernize critical systems

SAN MATEO – The City of San Mateo, in partnership with Foster City, received a major boost from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week as it was invited to apply for a \$277 million loan to support the Clean Water Program.

The [EPA announced](#) the Peninsula-based program as one of only 39 across the country to be invited to apply for a Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan. In all, the EPA received 62 letters of interest from 26 states and territories for the WIFIA federal low-interest loan program, before announcing it will offer up to \$5 billion during the Fiscal Year 2018 selection round.

The Clean Water Program, San Mateo Public Works Department's largest initiative, is one of six programs in the Bay Area shortlisted for this annual loan. The Clean Water Program will ask for up to \$277 million to modernize the City's wastewater treatment plant, which will improve the quality of water discharged into the San Francisco Bay and provide potential opportunities for water reuse.

"The flexibility of WIFIA funding is critical for the success of the treatment plant project and overall success of the Clean Water Program," said Brad Underwood, San Mateo's Public Works director. "We greatly appreciate the advocacy of our Council and the support of our U.S. senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, as well as congressional representatives Jackie Speier and Anna Eshoo, who worked on our behalf."

If successful, the loan will fund nearly half of the critical upgrades and expansion of San Mateo's aging wastewater treatment plant, which is anticipated to be completed by 2024. The plant serves 143,000 residents in San Mateo, Foster City, Hillsborough and parts of unincorporated San Mateo County. The final WIFIA loan decision will be made in 2019.

"The \$277 million loan will help ensure that heavy rainstorms won't contaminate San Mateo's streets, creeks, lagoons, beaches and ultimately San Francisco Bay," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein. "I'm pleased the EPA provided this critical loan financing and commend San Mateo and its residents for raising local rates to make the project possible."

The City is actively pursuing a range of financing options for the entire \$1 billion Clean Water Program, and the WIFIA loan could save residents and ratepayers millions of dollars in interest costs. This program was rated highly as it has the potential to protect the environmentally-sensitive San Francisco Bay by eliminating sewage overflows.

"I pushed for this loan from the EPA and I am pleased that the importance of this project registered with the agency. This loan will allow San Mateo, Foster City, and Hillsborough to create the most modern, environmentally-sensitive treatment plant in our state," said Rep. Jackie Speier, who represents the 14th Congressional District. "This low interest loan will be critical to achieving this goal and is extremely beneficial to the residents of my district and our environment. Bravo to these three cities for creating a successful and competitive package."

EPA's WIFIA loans allow large and small communities across the country to implement projects to address two national water priorities – providing for clean and safe drinking water including reducing exposure to lead and other contaminants and addressing aging water infrastructure.

About the Clean Water Program

Jointly owned, operated, and funded by the City of San Mateo and the City of Foster City/Esterio Municipal Improvement District, the program benefits the 143,000 residents served by San Mateo's wastewater treatment plant in San Mateo, Foster City, Hillsborough and parts of unincorporated San Mateo County, as well as the more than 7 million people who reside in the San Francisco Bay Area. The project is recognized by the Regional Water Quality Control Board as taking a lead role in nutrient management of the San Francisco Bay.

For more information about the Clean Water Program, visit: <http://cleanwaterprogramsanmateo.org>.

About WIFIA

Established by the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014, the WIFIA program is a federal loan and guarantee program at the EPA that aims to accelerate investment in the nation's water infrastructure by providing long-term, low-cost supplemental credit assistance for regionally and nationally significant projects.

According to the EPA's estimate of national drinking water and wastewater needs, over \$743 billion is needed for water infrastructure improvements. The EPA's WIFIA program plays an important part in fulfilling this need and in the President's Infrastructure Plan, which calls for expanding project eligibility.

For more information about the WIFIA program, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/wifia>.

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