

# W A T E R

Opportunities to improve water quality and management are coming to Michigan through recent federal climate investments in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Federal funding has the potential to increase access to clean, safe drinking water and improve the state's water infrastructure. About \$700 million has already been invested in Michigan to improve water infrastructure. By 2026, the state expects to receive about \$11 billion in IIJA investments, including \$1.3 billion for water infrastructure improvements.<sup>1</sup>

If managed equitably, these funds can significantly benefit Michigan residents. Michigan ranks among the Top 10 states with the most lead pipes, with an estimated 460,000 lead water service lines. The annual gap in funding for the state's water infrastructure needs is estimated to range between \$860 million and \$1.1 billion.<sup>2</sup> Residents increasingly face localized flooding and stormwater issues and water system management challenges. Exposure to lead and untreated or partially treated raw sewage during flooding events disproportionately impacts low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

**Improving water quality and infrastructure with federal investments can enhance the health and well-being of community members.**

## Replacing Lead Drinking Water Pipes

- Homes built before 1945 are most likely to have lead pipes that connect individual homes to public water mains. Roughly 56% of Detroit's housing stock, 50% of Saginaw homes, and about 36% of Flint houses were built before 1950. Detroit has an estimated 80,000 lead service lines. Following a [landmark lawsuit](#) filed in 2016, Flint was awarded \$97 million in a settlement agreement to begin the process of replacing lead pipes and providing safe drinking water to residents. Although progress has been made in Flint to identify and replace lead service lines, there are at least about 300 residences that still need lead pipe replacement. There are approximately 30,000 water service lines in Saginaw, about 12,000 of which need lead service line replacement. Officials predict that it will take 20 to 25 years to complete all needed replacements.<sup>3</sup> As of March, **nearly \$87 million has been allocated to Michigan for lead pipe and service line replacement. An additional investment of \$145 million** can also be used for lead pipe replacement. In May 2024, the state announced a **federal award of nearly \$62 million** for lead water service line removal projects, and in October 2024, nearly **\$134,633 in IIJA investments** in the state revolving funds was announced.<sup>4</sup> More information about getting lead service lines replaced in Detroit can be found [here](#). Information about replacements in Flint can be found [here](#).

## Improving Water System Infrastructure

- Saginaw received a **\$15 million grant for a new water tower** to support water distribution, enabling more reliable operation during power outages and allowing local officials to use

<sup>1</sup> White House, "Investing in America: President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is Delivering in Michigan, As of March 2024," accessed November 1, 2024; "Michigan Infrastructure Office", accessed October 30, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> WNEM 5, "Michigan awarded \$61.9M to help remove lead service lines," May 2, 2024; National Resource Council, "Lead Pipes Are Widespread and Used in Every State," July 8, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey, 2018-2022 5-Year Average Data; City of Detroit, "Lead Service Line Replacement Program"; Detroit Free Press, "Judge finds city of Flint in contempt for slow action on replacing lead water lines," March 13, 2024; "City of Saginaw Lead Service Line Replacement Program," August 5, 2019

<sup>4</sup> White House, "Investing in America: President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is Delivering in Michigan, As of March 2024"; Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, "State awarded \$61 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help communities remove lead service lines," May 2, 2024; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$134 Million for Water Infrastructure in Michigan Through Investing in America Agenda," October 23, 2024.



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- local funds to support housing development in the community.<sup>5</sup>
- Since 2022, approximately **\$179 million** has been allocated to Michigan to support the state's **Clean Water State Revolving Fund**, and **more than \$270 million** is being invested in the **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund**. These programs fund improvements in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems to promote the health and well-being of Michigan residents.<sup>6</sup>

## Managing Stormwater

- Detroit and Flint have both faced sewer overflow issues in recent years that have released untreated or partially treated wastewater and stormwater into local rivers and flooded neighborhood basements. In the Detroit area, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments was awarded **over \$4 million to address environmental quality in underserved communities**, including stormwater runoff issues and untreated stormwater. Up to grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$300,000 will be made, with a priority for disadvantaged communities. A webinar about the project will be held in January 2025, and grant applications can be submitted beginning April 1, 2025. Watch for more details about this opportunity [here](#).<sup>7</sup>
- The community-driven Jefferson-Chalmers Water Project in Detroit has been awarded **\$20 million to upgrade sewer mains and combined sewer systems** through which stormwater and wastewater flow in one pipe. The improvements will prevent more than 600 neighborhood homes from flooding, and the combined sewer upgrades will serve about 24,000 residents.<sup>8</sup>
- Saginaw residents are experiencing rate increases to pay for upgrades to the city's aging water and sewer systems.<sup>9</sup> Additional funding allocated to the **Sewer Overflow and Storm Water Reuse Municipal Grant program** could support future improvements, prioritizing financially-distressed communities and limiting the cost burden on ratepayers.

## Advancing Water and Public Health Equity

- One Love Global, which is based in Lansing, has been awarded **\$500,000 for a Detroit-centered water equity project** involving BIPOC young people. The young people involved in the project will conduct pilot testing of a water equity and quality tool and will then be involved in the implementation of the final tool.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Michigan Advance, "Kildee, White House officials tout \$213M in federal funding for clean water in Michigan," October 14, 2022; MLive.com, "Federal funds coming to Saginaw for new water tower," October 14, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Investments from EPA Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act."

<sup>7</sup> The Detroit News, "Macomb, Wayne counties make emergency discharges in midst of storms," August 25, 2023; MLive.com, "Flint spills sewage into river as rain overwhelms pump station, treatment plant," August 25, 2023; City of Detroit, "Stormwater Management and Drainage Charge"; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "Biden-Harris Administration Announces More Than \$35 million to Selectees to Fund Environmental Justice Projects Across the Great Lakes," March 26, 2024; City of Detroit, "Basement Backup and Flood Protection."

<sup>8</sup> The Detroit News, "Detroit neighborhood, Hamtramck win combined \$20 million for sewer upgrades," September 3, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> MLive, "Saginaw water, sewer rates increase as city readies for costly projects," February 1, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> The Detroit News, "Mich. to get \$2.5M grants to boost clean air, water in disadvantaged communities," October 25, 2023; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "2023 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving (EJCPS) Program Project Summaries."