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2021 Arkansas Water and Wastewater Funding: Ryan Benefield, Deputy Director, Natural Resources Division (Arkansas Department of Agriculture) Multibasin Regional Water Council Meeting Presentation

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Mr. Ryan Benefield undertook a presentation at the November 12th Multibasin Regional Water Council meeting held virtually titled:

2021 Arkansas Water and Wastewater Funding Issues ("Presentation")

Mr. Benefield serves as Deputy Director of the Natural Resources Division ("NRD") of the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

A key focus of the Presentation was how the State of Arkansas is prioritizing COVID relief funds from the American Rescue Plan Act and the anticipated infrastructure bill funding.

The NRD establishes policy and makes funding and regulatory decisions relative to soil conservation, nutrient management, water rights, dam safety and water resources planning and development. It is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Director is appointed by the Governor and reports to the Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture.

2021 Arkansas wastewater funding was referenced, including the following federal and state programs:

- Federal Programs
- Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund Program
- Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Program
- CWSRF Agriculture Water Quality Loan Program
- State Programs
- Water Development Fund
- Water Sewer and Solid Waste
- General Obligation Bonds

Mr. Benefield described the American Rescue Plan Act, including the Arkansas Steering Committee. Noted was the State Fiscal Recovery Fund for Arkansas, which is stated to include \$1.573 billion (not counting

funds distributed directly to cities and counties). The primary uses referenced were water, wastewater and broadband infrastructure.

The Presentation provided results of a Needs Survey which broke projects down by the following:

- Water
- Wastewater
- Stormwater
- Dam/Levee
- Mixed Project

Additional criteria for the projects were referenced in a chart that can be found in the attached slides.

The Presentation also provided locations for drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and mixed project locations based on the Needs Survey submission.

Proposed grant program criteria were addressed including grant allocation recommendations:

- Drinking Water - \$300,000,000
- Wastewater Treatment and Collection - \$200,000,000
- Stormwater, Floodplain, Non-point, Dam/Levee - \$50,000,000
- Technical Assistance – Water and Wastewater Systems - \$1,000,000

The maximum grant amount per entity for each project type is stated to be \$10,000,000. Further, the minimum cost share requirement is stated to be subject to percentages based on the median household income for the cities and/or counties served by the proposed project:

Median Household Income Level	Cost Share Percentage
• Less than \$30,000	0%
• \$30,000-\$50,000	25%
• Greater than \$50,000	50%

The Infrastructure and Jobs Act – CWSRF was discussed and it was noted that there are three “pots of funding” for SRFs: Mr. Benefield also detailed the proposed schedule for funding approval starting with the opening of the application period through a number of steps to construction completion deadline. Further, he detailed the proposed evaluation criteria for each type of project including the performance measures.

- Any eligible SRF project
- Remediation of emerging contaminants (PFAS/PFOA)
- Lead service line replacement (SDWSRF)

Additional funding associated with the State Revolving Funds, which include the Arkansas Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund and Arkansas Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund, were addressed.

Note that eligible CWSRF projects were referenced:

- Construction of publicly owned treatment works
- Nonpoint source
- National estuary program projects
- Decentralized wastewater treatment systems
- Stormwater
- Water conservation, efficiency, and reuse
- Watershed pilot projects
- Energy efficiency

- Water reuse
- Security measures at publicly owned treatment works
- Technical assistance

A copy of the slides can be downloaded [here](#).