

Massachusetts' Lead Removal and Reduction Programs

How Massachusetts is Implementing Federal Programs to Reduce Lead Exposure in Drinking Water

Nate Keenan, Deputy Director
MASSACHUSETTS CLEAN WATER TRUST



Lead Removal and Reduction Programs

- Massachusetts is taking advantage of two federal programs to help reduce lead in drinking water.
- The first is the Water Infrastructure Fund Transfer Act (WIFTA).
 - The law allows the state revolving fund (SRF) to transfer from the Clean Water SRF (CWSRF) to the Drinking Water SRF (DWSRF) an amount up to 5% of CWSRF federal grants.
 - The funds must be used as additional subsidy for projects that address lead in drinking water.
- The second is the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act.
 - Massachusetts was awarded \$3 million in grant funding through the “Reduction in Lead Exposure Via Drinking Water”.

WIFTA Implementation

- Massachusetts has older water infrastructure which includes lead service lines (LSLs).
- Over the past five years, the DWSRF has financed on average \$10 million a year of projects addressing lead.
- However, we know there a need not being met based on projects applying for financing but not moving to construction and a survey conducted with public drinking water systems.
- The Trust is hoping to use WIFTA to target more subsidy to these types of projects.

WIFTA Implementation (Continued)

- The most important decision was how much funding to transfer.
 - The Trust calculated what could be moved from the CWSRF without hindering the lending capacity and it was decided \$30 would be moved to the DWSRF.
 - Based on past applications and the requirement to commit funds within three years, \$30 million should be able to be a meaningful subsidy within the project commitment timeframe.
- Additionally, since communities have different needs when it comes to lead, the project eligibility is open to:
 - Planning and design;
 - Corrosion control, and;
 - Capital improvements for replacement of lead pipes and full LSL replacement.
- Finally, the subsidy is open to all communities, not only Disadvantaged Communities.

WIIN Grant Funding

- In 2016, the Trust launched the Assistance Program for Lead in School Drinking Water.
 - The program provided \$2.75 million for testing public school water fixtures for lead and copper.
 - Over 67,000 samples were collected at nearly 1,000 schools and identified 65% of schools had lead detected above 15 ppb and 95% had at least one detection above 1 ppb.
 - The program required the schools to notify students, parents and teachers of the testing results.
 - The data was made public and posted to a state website.
- From the data collected, it was clear that there an issue that needed to be addressed.

WIIN Grant Funding (Continued)

- In January, the Trust launched the School Water Improvement Grant Program (SWIG).
 - Funded with a state appropriation, any school with water fixtures that tested above 1 ppb in our testing program were eligible to replace the fixture with a water bottle fixtures that would filter lead.
 - For each fixture that was eligible to be replaced, the school receives \$3,000 for the purchase, installation, testing and maintenance.
- The pilot application was open from February to March 2020, and the Trust awarded:
 - \$954,000 in total grants
 - 318 water bottle filling stations purchased
 - 69,192 student enrolled in the schools receiving grants
 - 37 school districts received awards
 - 128 schools were part of the school districts
- The program has been receiving positive feedback, however, many of the grants have to be extended due to issues from the COVID-19 pandemic.

WIIN Grant Funding (Continued)

- When the WIIN Reduction in Lead Exposure Via Drinking Water grant opened the Trust saw an opportunity to expand the existing program and incentivize testing in new areas.
 - The SWIG program was designed to serve public schools but there was a need that was not being served, private schools, early education and childcare facilities in disadvantaged communities.
- The new program, called Enhanced SWIG (ESWIG), was awarded \$3 million from EPA with a \$750,000 state matching component, a total of \$3.75 million.

WIIN Grant Funding (Continued)

- The ESWIG program will focus on private education facilities located in Disadvantaged Communities and including the following criteria:
 - located within an Economic Opportunity Zone;
 - locations served by a public water system that had a lead AL Exceedance within the past four years;
 - facilities located in communities with confirmed or probable lead service lines;
 - schools and programs that primarily care for the most vulnerable population (children 6 years and under);
 - older facilities that are more likely to contain lead plumbing (e.g. facilities built before 1988);
 - established and sustainable childcare programs without factors indicating that the building may not be serving as a childcare facility in the future;
 - facilities located in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities;
 - facilities with drinking water test results that confirm the level of lead greater than 1 ppb;
 - facilities located in communities with elevated child blood lead levels as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

WIIN Grant Funding (Continued)

- The ESWIG program will be available to an estimated 107 private elementary schools and 379 private group early education centers that serve over 75 student.
- The goal is the following:
 - 1,250 filling stations;
 - Serving 68,957 students; and,
 - Bring these facilities into the state testing program to develop a comprehensive picture of lead issues in schools in the Commonwealth.
- The Trust has received notification of the award but is still waiting on the grant.

Lead Remediation in Massachusetts

- The Trust is hopeful that the WIFTA and WIIN legislation will provide the subsidy necessary to move more projects to construction.
- WIFTA was a positive change to the SRFs allowing for the movement between funds, and most importantly, only if states deemed it necessary and in an amount they determined.
- The WIIN grant is allowing us to expand our current program to Massachusetts education facilities who might not otherwise be able to access the program.

Get In Touch

Nate Keenan, Deputy Director

MASSACHUSETTS CLEAN WATER TRUST

1 Center Plaza, Suite 430 | Boston, MA 02108

(617) 327-9333 ext 508 | nkeenan@tre.state.ma.us



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