

New Jersey's Water Infrastructure: Information Sheet for Press Kits

To support media coverage of New Jersey's water infrastructure issues, this fact sheet offers background information on water infrastructure in the state. It is a product of the Jersey Water Works Education and Outreach Committee whose goal is to promote well-informed decision makers, community partners, residents and ratepayers and their active participation and influence in the planning and management of their water infrastructure.

Facts on Water Infrastructure in New Jersey

1. Three categories of water systems:
 - Drinking water (bringing potable water to homes and businesses)
 - Stormwater (carries runoff from rain to rivers, bays, and waterways)
 - Wastewater ("sanitary" systems that bring used water, or untreated sewage, to treatment plants)
2. Combined Sewer Overflows
 - Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO): A heavy rainfall and "discharge event" in which both stormwater and untreated sewage combine and flow into nearby waterways.
 - Total number of CSO municipalities in New Jersey: 21
 - Estimate of untreated sewage released into NJ waterways annually: 23 billion gallons (Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2012)
 - Of NJ's 565 municipalities, 21 have Combined Sewer Systems that are aging and some of which are severely deteriorating. CSO municipalities are working to upgrade and maintain their systems.
 - Five largest CSO wastewater treatment plants in New Jersey based on permitted flow (Source: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection):
 - Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission – 330 MGD
 - Middlesex County Utilities Authority – 147 MGD
 - Camden City Municipal Utility Authority – 80 MGD
 - Bergen County Utilities Authority – 75 MGD
 - Joint Meeting of Essex & Union County – 75 MGD
 - For more information visit: www.jerseywaterworks.org/csos
3. Estimated amount of drinking water lost each day due to leakage: 130 million gallons (Source: [Natural Resources Defense Council](#))
4. Public opinion on water: Percentage of residents citing water infrastructure investments as a top or important priority for the state governor and legislature: 90% (Source: New Jersey Future and Jersey Water Works: New Jersey Opinions on the State of Our Water Systems, the Environment and Infrastructure)
5. Common financing options for improving water infrastructure:
 - User fees from drinking water, wastewater, stormwater utilities
 - Federal or state grants and loans
 - State or municipal bonds

6. Sustainable practices on the municipal, neighborhood, and property owner level:
 - Slowing rain and stormwater runoff – capturing water on property to allow natural seepage, for example, creating a rain garden on your property.
 - Capturing rainwater for 'greywater' use - watering plants; flushing toilets; washing cars, etc.
 - Storm drains: ensuring storm sewers are functioning and litter-free.
7. Green infrastructure techniques:
 - Rainwater harvesting: Installing a water-capturing vessel connected to gutters and leaders
 - Rain gardens: Designing and building a depression with stones and native, resilient plants that serves as a water collector or "swale" during storms.

Summary context:

- An estimated 23 billion gallons of untreated sewage is released into NJ waterways annually from Combined Sewer Overflows, due to old and stressed sewer infrastructure that can't handle the amount of water entering the system.
- An estimated 130 million gallons of treated drinking water are being lost each day across New Jersey. As much as 50 million gallons could be saved through repairs that pay for themselves -- enough to service a city over twice the size of Newark every day (Source: [Natural Resources Defense Council](#)).
- Old, outdated infrastructure translates into local flooding, drinking water containing lead, water pollution, and sewer and water main breaks stressing municipalities financially.

Public Interest:

- People in New Jersey and across the nation prize clean water, they share a concern about their water systems and they are willing to pay more to improve and modernize their water systems.
- 90% of residents surveyed say investments in repairing old, leaky pipes and other water infrastructure improvements should be a top or important priority for the state governor and legislature, according to Jersey Water Works and New Jersey Future's report.
- The matter of fixing pipes is relevant to all New Jerseyans as it will protect water sources, save money and improve health, translating into more sustainable, modern, and healthy communities.
- Improving water infrastructure is going to cost billions of dollars statewide. Financing options include a user fees, grants, and bonds.
- Green infrastructure techniques including rain gardens, pervious pavement and planted swales capture rainwater so it seeps into the ground instead of running off paved surfaces into the stressed sewer systems.

About Jersey Water Works:

Jersey Water Works is a collaborative effort of many diverse organizations and individuals who embrace the common purpose of transforming New Jersey's inadequate water infrastructure by investing in sustainable, cost-effective solutions that provide communities with clean water and waterways; healthier, safer neighborhoods; local jobs; flood and climate resilience; and economic growth. Learn more at www.jerseywaterworks.org

More information:

- www.JerseyWaterWorks.org
- [Why Water Infrastructure Matters to New Jersey](#)
(jerseywaterworks.org/NJwaterinfrastructurematters)

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