



Water Environment Federation
the water quality people®

Federal Water Policy: 2025 Wrap & 2026 Forecast


Steve Dye, Managing Director of Government Affairs & Strategic Partnerships
sdye@wef.org

Ashley Voskuhl, Director of Regulatory Affairs
avoskuhl@wef.org

1


Today we'll go over...

- Recap of 2025
- What to expect in 2026
- How to speak up for water



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2




Life Free of Water Challenges

WEF Strategic Plan

Attract and develop a diverse and passionate water workforce

Cultivate a purpose driven community to sustainably solve water challenges for all

Lead the transformation to the Circular Water Economy



3

Major Themes from 2025 WE&T

Stormwater

Workforce

Sustainability


Digital PFAS

Outreach

Energy Nutrients Circular

Infrastructure

Water Reuse



4

2025: Presidential Transition Year

New EPA Leadership

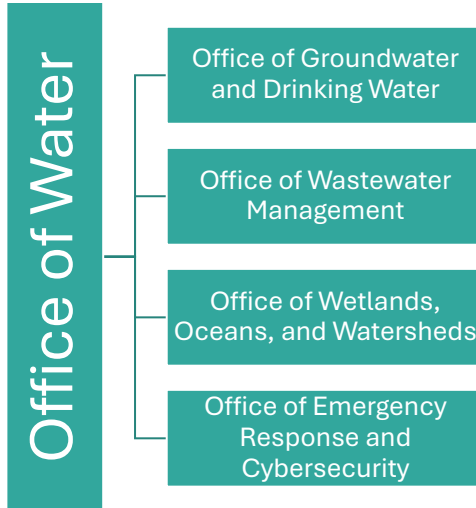
- **Lee Zeldin**, EPA Administrator
- **Jessica Kramer**, Assistant Administrator for Office of Water

Proposed Budget Cuts

- 65% cut proposed in President's Budget

Reorganization

- New to Office of Water – Office of Emergency Response and Cybersecurity
- Removed Office of Science and Technology
- Portions of the Office of Research and Development integrated into Office of Water



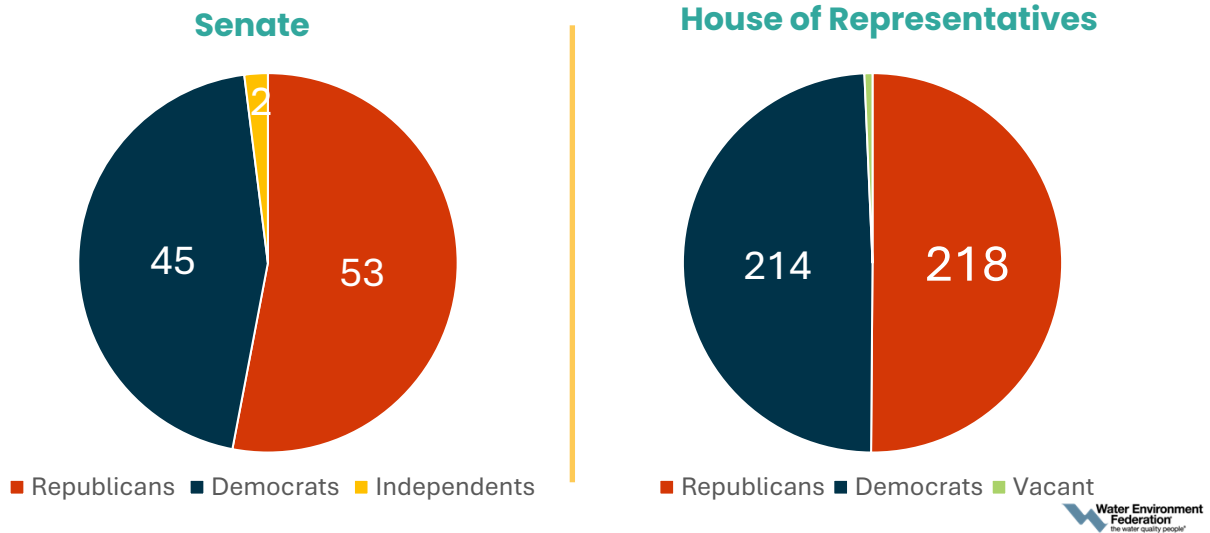
5

Administrator Zeldin's Five Pillars



6

119th Congress



7

2025 Congressional Priorities

- Big Beautiful Bill
 - Tax-Exempt Muni Bonds are safe
- Government Shutdown
 - Impact on Infrastructure Funding
 - Congressional deadlock for 1.5 months
- Important Committees
 - House: Transportation and Infrastructure
 - Senate: Environment and Public Works
 - Both: Appropriations

8

FY26 Interior & Environment Appropriations Bill

FY26 I & E Approps.	CW SRF	DW SRF	Program	Amount
FY26 Base (same as FY24/25)	\$1,639 Billion	\$1,126 billion	WIFIA*	\$72 million
CDS	\$893 Million	\$715 million	OSG*	\$41 million
Cap. Grant after CDS	\$746 million	\$411 million	Workforce Development Grants	\$5.4 million
% Cap. Grant Change from FY24/25	-55%	-64%	Alternative Source Water Grants (new funding)	\$2 million
			Stormwater Centers of Excellence*	\$2 million
			Advanced Aquifer Use & Recharge*	\$3.5 million
			Sect. 319*	\$175 million
			Sect 106 (small increase)	\$226.4 million



9

PFAS



10

EPA's 2024-25 PFAS Actions

NPDES Multi-Sector General Permit for Stormwater Discharges w/ Industrial Activity (includes PFAS monitoring requirements)

Draft National Recommended Ambient Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health for PFOS, PFOA, and PFBS

Proposed Clean Water Act Methods Update Rule 22 for Analysis of Contaminants in Effluent (includes Method 1633 to test for 40 PFAS in wastewater)

Draft Risk Assessment for PFOS and PFOA in Biosolids

PFAS Data Reporting and Recordkeeping Under Toxic Substances Control Act (Joint with AWWA, AMWA, NACWA)

11

Zeldin's Planned PFAS Actions

Creation of Effluent Limitation Guidelines for certain PFAS

Establish a clear liability framework

Designate a cross-program agency lead

Annual updates to PFAS Destruction and Disposal Guidance

Ramp up development of PFAS testing strategies

Use SDWA authorities to address immediate contamination

Coordinate with states to address risks

Determine a path forward for biosolids risk assessment based on comments



12

2026 PFAS Regulatory Forecast

- (Proposed) Effluent Limitation Guidelines for PFAS Manufacturers
- (Proposed) PFAS Requirements in NPDES Applications
- (Proposed) Updated PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation
 - Extending compliance deadline to 2031, maintaining PFOS & PFOA maximum contaminant levels at 4 parts per trillion
 - Withdrawal regulatory determinations for PFHxS, PFNA, GenX, PFBS
- (Final) Methods Update Rule 22 for Analysis of Contaminants in Effluent
- Update to PFAS Destruction and Disposal Guidance



13

WEF's PFAS Position Statement

Updated in 2025

- Stop PFAS at the Source
- Support Government Funding
- Balanced Remediation Costs
- Integrate Circular Solutions
- Use Science-Based Policymaking
- Encourage Investment in Research & Development
- Support Education & Training
- Engage a Broad Community

How you can use this position statement

- Advocacy & Hill Visits
- Regulatory Comments
- Local Engagement
- Pretreatment & Industry Outreach
- Communications


Visit:

<https://www.wef.org/about/Governance/position-statements/>



14

We need your help to ensure water utilities are protected from PFAS liability!

- **H.R. 1267, the Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act** -- 25 bipartisan co-sponsors
- EPA emphasized need for congressional action to protect passive, involuntary receivers of PFAS
- Use WEF's Water Advocates platform to urge congress to pass this important legislation. 



Circular Water Economy

Biosolids

- EPA is reviewing the comments on the Draft Risk Assessment for PFOA and PFOS in biosolids
 - WEF recommended EPA evaluate risk management options
- Recovering nutrients or energy from biosolids is an important component to circular water
- Use WEF's Water Advocates Platform to educate congress about the importance of biosolids



17

Water Reuse

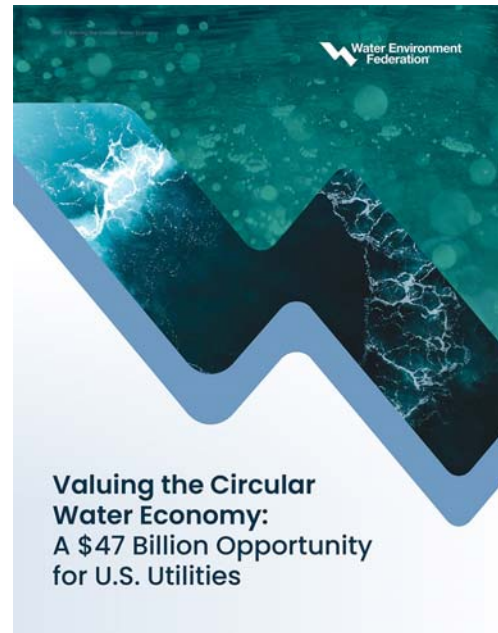
- 2025 celebrated the 5th Anniversary of EPA's National Water Reuse Action Plan (WRAP)
 - More than \$7.8 billion federal investment into reuse infrastructure since 2020
 - Water Reuse is a central component of circular water economy
- Use WEF's Water Advocates Platform to support the Advance Water Reuse Act



18

Learn More About Circular Water

- **WEF's Valuation Report**
- **Circular Water 101 Course**
- **Case Study Map**
- **Circular Water Study Tours**
- **Learn more at:**
www.wef.org/circular-water-economy/circular-water-economy/



19

Cybersecurity

20

Cybersecurity Resources

- Cybersecurity toolkit and technical assistance available for water utilities
- **CISA:** cisa.gov/water
- **EPA:** www.epa.gov/waterresilience/epa-cybersecurity-water-sector
- **NIST:** www.nist.gov/cyberframework
- **WEF letter to Congress**

FREE CYBER VULNERABILITY SCANNING FOR WATER UTILITIES

WATER SECTOR COORDINATING COUNCIL

Logos for NACWA, NAWQA, ISAC, and ASDWA.

OVERVIEW
 Drinking water and wastewater systems are an essential community lifeline. It is important to protect your system from cyberattacks to maintain its vital operations. You can reduce the risk of a cyberattack on your utility by annually scanning your network for vulnerabilities caused by publicly facing devices. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) can help your drinking water and wastewater system identify and address vulnerabilities with a no cost **vulnerability scanning service** subscription. CISA, the Water Sector Coordinating Council, and the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators encourage drinking water and wastewater utilities to use this service.

BENEFITS
 CISA's vulnerability scanning can help your utility identify and address cybersecurity weaknesses that an attacker could use to impact your system. The benefits of this service include:

- Identifying internet-accessible assets
- Identifying vulnerabilities in your utility's assets connected to the internet, including **known-Exposed Vulnerabilities** and internet-exposed services commonly used for initial access by threat actors and some ransomware gangs
- Weekly reports on scanning status and recommendations for mitigating identified vulnerabilities
- Significant reduction in identified vulnerabilities in the first few months of scanning for newly enrolled water utilities
- Ongoing detection and reporting with continuous scanning for new vulnerabilities

HOW DOES IT WORK?
 CISA uses automated tools to conduct vulnerability scanning on your external network. These tools look for vulnerabilities and weak configurations that adversaries could use to conduct a cyberattack. CISA's scanning provides an

Figure 2. Sample Page in Weekly Report

21

Artificial Intelligence

22

Trump Administration Priority

- January – E.O. 14179: Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- July – Winning the AI Race: America’s AI Action Plan
 - E.O. 14318: Accelerating Federal Permitting of America’s AI Infrastructure
 - E.O. 14319: Promoting the Export of the American AI Technology Stack
 - E.O. 14320: Preventing Woke AI in the Federal Government
- AI Czar Davis Sacks, Dec. 2025
- EPA to expedite permitting by developing or modifying regulations
- EPA to identify and export permitting of Brownfield and Superfund sites for AI infrastructure use
- Army Corps of Engineers to determine if a nationwide Clean Water Act 404 permit is needed for data-center related activities



23

Water-AI Nexus

- WEF & our partners are convening voices in Water and AI, advancing water sector resilience and innovation
- Lead and convene research at the intersection of water and AI
- Advance AI-powered community water solutions
- Empower the next generation of water leaders in the AI era
- Learn more at: water-ai-nexus.org



WATER ∞ AI NEXUS™

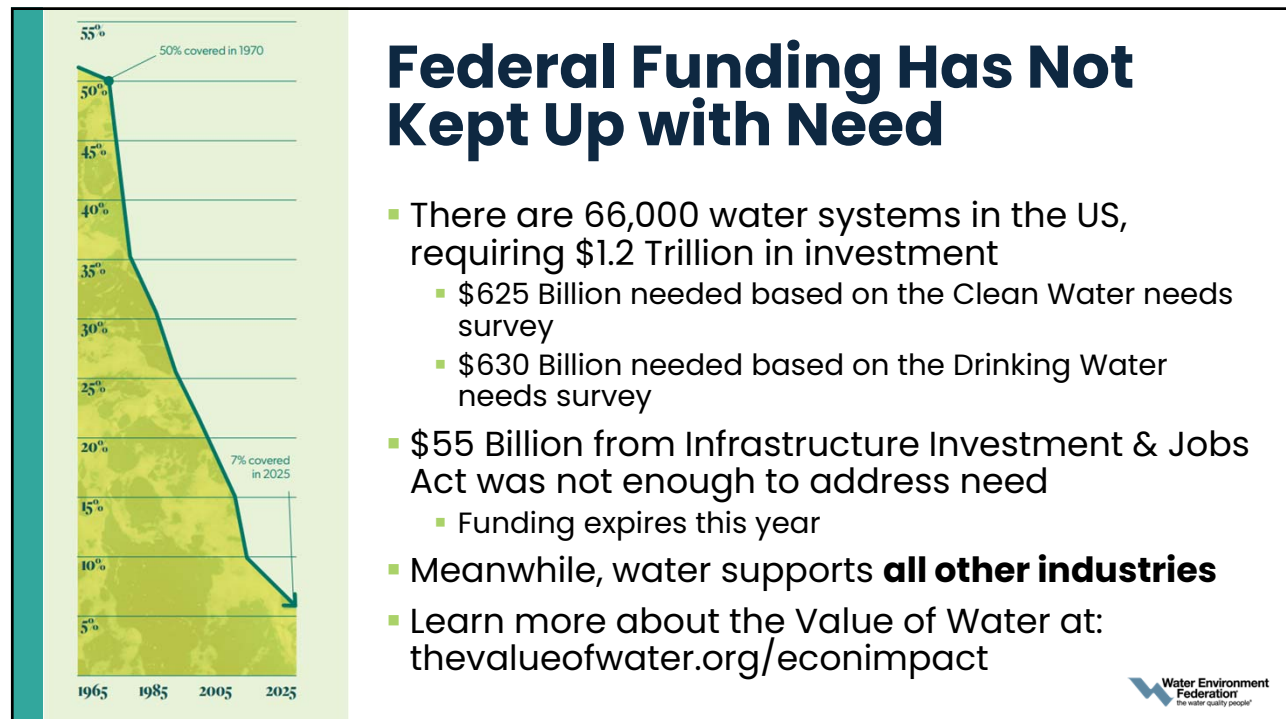
Principles For Sustainable Water Use By Data Centers:
Building More Effective
Public-Private Collaboration



24

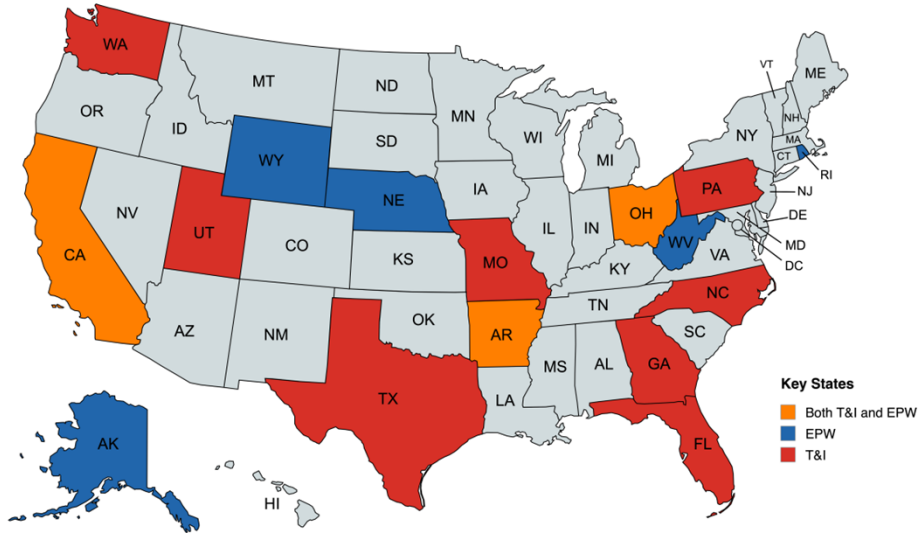
Infrastructure Funding

25



26

Key States for Reauthorization



27

What else should we expect in 2026?



28

Definition of Waters of the United States

- Zeldin water priority
 - Comments submitted on 1/6/2026
 - WEF requested categorical exemptions for:
 - Stormwater Infrastructure
 - Circular Water Practices
 - Requested clarifications and flexibility in definitions
 - Requested predictability and repeatability
- WEF has commented on WOTUS in 2011, 2014, 2017, 2022, 2025, and 2026
 - Comments are drafted by WEF's Government Affairs Community, Regulatory Focus Group
 - Reach out to Ashley Voskuhl (avoskuhl@wef.org) to get involved



29

Permitting Reform

- Administration priority & Zeldin's 5 pillars
 - E.O. 14318: Accelerating Permitting of America's AI Infrastructure
 - EPA and other federal agencies exploring use of AI to streamline operations & permitting
- WEF's Enabling Innovation through Permitting Series explores non-regulatory approaches for streamlined permitting
 - Congress passes PERMIT and SPEED Acts



30

401 Water Quality Certification

- Falls under permitting priority
 - Proposed changes out for public comment
 - Closes February 17, 2026
 - Comments are being drafted with WEF's Government Affairs Community, Regulatory Focus Group
- To get involved with the GAC, join the community on WEFUnity: **community.wef.org/page/welcome**
 - You can also reach out to our community manager, Jennifer Sabater (jsabater@wef.org) or Ashley Voskuhl (avoskuhl@wef.org)



31

Updated WEF Position Statements

- Policy communication tools
 - Share with officials
 - Use to craft messaging
 - Updated in 2025:
 - Stormwater
 - PFAS
 - www.wef.org/about/Governance/position-statements/
- Coming in 2026
 - Circular Water Economy
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Contaminants of Emerging Concern
 - Workforce
 - Biosolids
 - Infrastructure Funding
 - And more?



32

Legislation

Priority Bills

- **Water Infrastructure Programs Reauthorization***
- **PFAS CERCLA Liability Exemption***
 - *H.R. 1267, the Water Systems PFAS Liability Protection Act -- 25 bipartisan co-sponsors*
- **WIPPES Act***
 - *S. 1092 & HR 2267, Wastewater Infrastructure Pollution Prevention and Environmental Safety (WIPPES) Act*

*** = WEF Water Advocates Call-to-Action**

Additional Bills

- **Advancing Water Reuse Act, H.R.2940***
 - *Industrial Tax Credit for Reuse*
- **Water Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Act, H.R. 5566/S.3590**
- **Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program Establishment Act, H.R.4733**
- **Clean Water Standards for PFAS Act of 2025, H.R.6668**
- **Special Districts Fairness Act, S. 2014 and HR 2766**

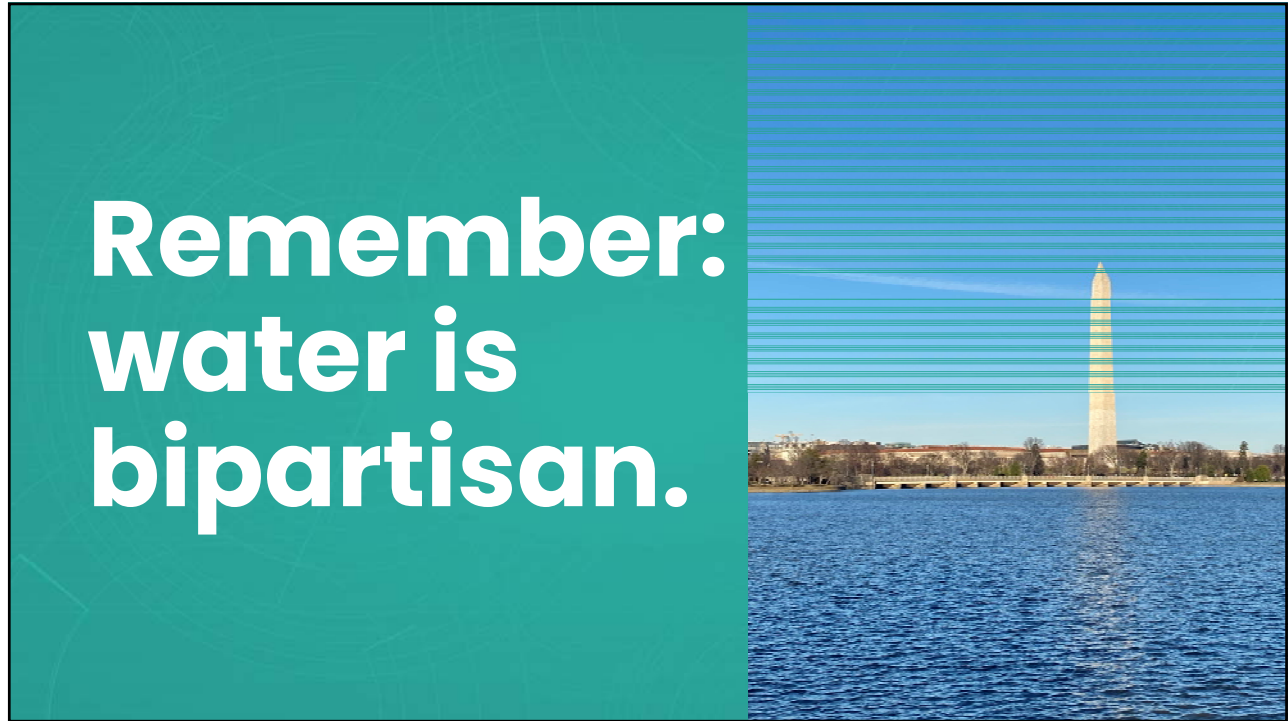


33

What can you do?



34




35

Water Policy Fly In April 14-15, 2026

- Join hundreds of water professionals from around the nation in Washington, DC, to speak up for water.
- Co-hosted by WEF, NACWA, WaterReuse Association, the Water Research Foundation, and AMWA
- More details at www.waterweek.us
- Sponsorship support from:





36

Become a water advocate today!

Share your story with congress, YOU are the water expert.



Current Campaigns:

- Reauthorization of Water Funding
- Advancing Water Reuse Act
- Benefits of Biosolids
- Water System PFAS Liability Protection Act
- WIPPES Act

Tell your colleagues, friends, & family too—membership not required.



37

Get involved – speak up for water!

Join a WEF Community	Join a Member Association Committee	Attend the National Water Policy Fly-In	Attend WEFTEC
Attend national and local specialty conferences	Submit public comments	Educate your community	Contribute case studies and data to inform policy
Write a publication, article or fact sheet	Nominate someone for a scholarship or award	Share your water story	And more...



38



Thank you!

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