

Governor Quinn Announces Decatur Clean Water Projects to Create 160 Jobs

Written by Brooke Anderson
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Illinois Clean Water Initiative Will Invest Nearly \$13 Million to Rehabilitate and Modernize Decatur Sewer System and Wastewater Treatment Plant

DECATUR – Governor Pat Quinn today announced \$13 million in low-interest loans to update the Decatur sewer system and wastewater treatment plant. Funded through Governor Quinn’s \$1 billion Illinois Clean Water Initiative (CWI), the projects will help meet the clean water needs of nearly 90,000 residents and create 160 direct and indirect jobs. This announcement is part of Governor Quinn’s agenda to drive Illinois’ economy forward and protect the environment by modernizing Illinois’ water infrastructure.

“A region’s economic and environmental strength is based on the availability of clean water,” Governor Quinn said. “By making critical infrastructure investments now, we can create jobs and make sure that every person and business in the area can have the clean water access they need to live and work.”

The city of Decatur will receive an \$8.6 million low-interest loan to rehabilitate portions of its sewer system that have been determined to be most at risk of causing: loss of service for a large number of customers, high volumes of untreated discharges to Lake Decatur (the city water supply), significant property damage and very high repair costs in the event that they fail. Many of these critical portions of the overall 2.2 million foot sewer system were constructed very deep and are located in highly developed areas, including Lake Shore Drive.

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“These loans will help city taxpayers avoid expensive emergency repairs and protect residents from harmful effects should these sewers fail,” said Decatur Mayor Mike McElroy. “These are responsible investments that will pay off for Decatur for years to come.”

The Sanitary District of Decatur will receive a \$4.1 million low-interest loan to make a number of critical upgrades to its wastewater treatment facility located on the Sangamon River. The project will include replacing the primary digester, which has experienced mechanical problems and surpassed its useful life, with a new digester that will also meet new employee safety standards while increasing the plant’s efficiency and further protecting the area’s water supply from pollutants.

“Loans like these have been an important financing tool for the Sanitary District of Decatur for many years,” Dan Smallwood, president of the Board of Trustees, said. “This investment will help us continue to update our facilities while keeping costs to residents at a reasonable level.”

Together, these projects are estimated to create approximately 113 direct construction jobs for area trade union members, including laborers, plumbers, pipefitters, Teamsters, electricians, carpenters and operating engineers, as well as about 48 indirect jobs related to purchase of services, supplies and equipment. The CWI provides a local economic boost across the state by insuring adequate water and sewer infrastructure for residents and business alike and supports an estimated 28,000 jobs throughout Illinois.

“These projects will improve the quality of life for tens of thousands of residents in the Decatur area and will support the quality of life and business climate for years to come,” Lisa Bonnett, director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), said. “Our agency is proud to work with so many of our local government partners to protect the environment and we want to encourage more communities to get more information about the CWI and how it could help their residents.”

“Governor Quinn’s Clean Water Initiative is a win-win-win,” Chris Meister, executive director of the Illinois Finance Authority, said. “Taxpayers save money from low-interest rate loans and thousands of men and women in the unionized buildings and trades will go to work on projects that will ensure clean safe water for their communities. On behalf of our Chairman Bill Brandt and our entire volunteer board, the Illinois Finance Authority is excited to partner with IEPA on

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financing these vital water infrastructure projects.”

Governor Quinn launched the \$1 billion Illinois Clean Water Initiative in his 2012 State of the State address to overhaul aging drinking water and wastewater treatment plants and distribution and collection systems. The CWI is funded with annual federal grants, funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and additional principal and interest from loan repayments. No new state tax dollars are used.

According to the U.S. EPA it is estimated the total water infrastructure needs in Illinois over the next 20 years total \$32 billion, including \$17 billion in wastewater projects (which is the 6th highest among the states) and \$15 billion in drinking water projects (4th highest need in the nation).

To learn more about Governor Quinn’s Illinois Clean Water Initiative, visit CleanWater.Illinois.gov

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