

Rural Water Policy Advisory [1/22/2018]

Single Issue Edition: Federal Government Shutdown and Rural Water

Rural Water Technical Assistance Initiatives to Continue during Shutdown: On Friday, NRWA Headquarters released the following correspondence from USDA’s Rural Utilities Service which funds all Circuit Riders and Wastewater Technicians:

Dear Contractor, While we do not know if there will be a Lapse in Appropriations after midnight tonight, prudence requires appropriate planning. Your contract has been identified as critical to RD operations. As such, you will be required to continue work during any lapse in appropriations (to include any necessary/emergency work over the weekend).

NRWA Headquarters also announced that it does not anticipate any funding issues with any of our federal programs. Some NRWA technical assistance initiatives (i.e. the EPA-funded technical assistance) are funded using past years’ appropriations.

Rural Water in a Good Posture for End-of-Year Funding Contingencies: Advocating for federal funding is one of the seminal missions of the Rural Water enterprise. The following table reflects the priority federal funding initiatives that NRWA and state associations urge Congress to fund each year. The current government shutdown is a result of Congress’s failure to pass a new funding or “appropriations” bill before the end of the fiscal year (September 31) or pass a short term extension of the current fiscal year appropriations – the so-called “Continuing Resolution.” It is likely that the final agreement to fund the federal government will include all Rural Water priorities because both the House and Senate have included funding for their versions of the spending measure and the final appropriations package will result from the reconciliation of the House and Senate bills.

Initiative	FY2017 Final	FY2018 House	FY2018 Senate
USDA Circuit Rider Technical Assistance	\$16,897,000	\$16,897,000	\$18,000,000
USDA Grassroots Source Water Protection Program	\$6,500,000	\$6,000,000	\$6,500,000
USDA Wastewater Disposal Technical Assistance	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
USDA Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program	\$571,190,000	\$472,700,000	550,838,000
USDA Water & Waste Disposal Revolving Loan Funds	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
EPA Technical Assistance and Training	\$12,700,000	\$12,700,000	\$12,700,000

EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund	\$1,393,887,000	\$1,143,887,000	\$1,393,887,000
EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	\$863,233,000	\$863,233,000	\$863,233,000

Congress Works During Shutdown: The House and Senate were in session on Sunday with the federal government shutdown in its second day. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) were publicly resolute in their opposing positions. Behind the scenes, however, some are commenting that a deal could be reached to reopen the government early in the week. The deal would fund the government until February 8, 2018, with a promise for votes on protection for young immigrants from deportation.

Despite Shutdown, EPA Says It Has Funds to Operate until January 26, 2018: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt says the agency has sufficient funds to fully operate at existing levels until January 26, 2018. In a January 19, 2018 message to all agency employees, the Administrator said, “At this time EPA has sufficient resources to remain open for a limited amount of time in the event of a government shutdown. All EPA employees should follow their normal work schedule for the week of January 22... Should the shutdown occur and remain in place through January 26, 2018, we will provide further updates on the agency’s operating status. In addition, all travel needs to be approved by the Administrator’s Office.” EPA has a total of 14,449 staffers.

National Rural Water Association

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The National Rural Water Association is the country’s largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities.

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