

Government Affairs Committee Report

January 16, 2009

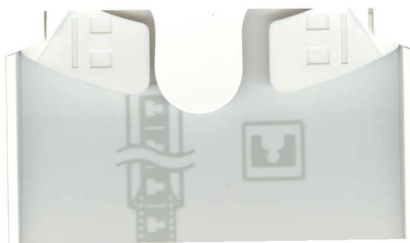
Sustainable Infrastructure Group – The group consists of representatives of MWWCA, MWUA, DEP, DWP, and MWRA. We have been meeting since November and drafted a Resolve to be sent to the Legislature. At the January 9th meeting we were joined by staff from AGC and Maine Tomorrow. AGC believes that this effort should simply be a request for funding through fees and revenue bonds and thinks the resolves are “a waste of paper they are printed on”. AGC will help us get funding bills through the Legislature. However, MWWCA has concerns about reviewing the current of future funding programs; sources of funds internal and external; loan/grant criteria; incentives for specific activities; or techniques to address disposal of non-sanitary waste, e.g. wipes; through a comprehended study. This may be the only opportunity to review current procedures, analyze their effectiveness, and address deficiencies in the program that we will have for awhile. The Resolve recommended a two year study of these issues. The Group will try to tackle this in two months.

Legislative Bus Tour – A tour for new legislators sponsored by MDF. They will be at the Westbrook WWTF Thursday January 22nd from 3:30-4:15. PWD staff will briefly explain the operation and age of the plant and the collection system. We will have pictures of blockages caused by rags and the DEP will present information on the funding gap. Each legislator will receive a list of projects funded by SRF loans and grants in their District.

Legislative Breakfast – At the Senator Inn Wednesday February 4th 7:30-9:30. Breakfasts for members of the Executive and Government Affairs Committees will be paid by MWWCA. As in past years there will be Power Point presentation on infrastructure and a brief presentation by MWUA, NEWEA, and MWWCA. Also, each legislator will receive a list of projects funded by SRF loans and grants in their District.

Legislation

- LD 10 “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Drinking Water Programs” sponsored by Rep. Flood. This is for SRF matching funds.
- “An Act to Create a Sustainable Funding Mechanism for Water and Wastewater Infrastructure in the State of Maine” sponsored by Rep. Seth Berry. If a sustainable funding mechanism can be found during the 2 month study it will be presented here. If the state decides to issue infrastructure bonds this bill would also be a vehicle for including water and wastewater.
- “Resolve, to Create a Sustainable Funding Mechanism for Water and Wastewater Infrastructure in the State of Maine” sponsored by Sen. Phil Bartlett. If we are unsuccessful in the next 2 months we will return to the original 2 year resolve study.



Sustainable Infrastructure for Water and Wastewater Systems

Draft outline for Legislative Resolve

Structure

- Taskforce named by Gov / legislature (appropriations committee?). 10 members, representation from legislature, clean water, drinking water, municipal finance, general public.
- Staffed by outside consultant and state agencies.
- Work for one year; report back to Approps, NR, and HHS committees.

Scope of work

Sustainable Infrastructure Financing:

- Report on short and long term prospects for future federal contributions to water and wastewater infrastructure – are SRFs really going away?
- Report on short and long term status of available funding in regards to short and long term needs. Include SRF and all other federal sources of funds.
- Evaluate and make a recommendation on a long-term strategy for a state-based water and wastewater infrastructure financing mechanism that is sustainable and ensures long term capital needs, including ability to meet future regulatory requirements, can be met. This includes identification of particular revenue streams that could be used.
- Evaluate and report back on recommended strategies for how State generates its cap grant contribution for SRFs – including general fund appropriations, revenue bonds, and other strategies.
- Evaluate and report back on how State grant dollars for water and wastewater infrastructure should be appropriated, including an assessment on whether the current MHI standards remain appropriate or another affordability metric would be more appropriate.
- Investigate, and make any recommendations on, how to increase the levels of loans and grants to water and wastewater systems.

Sustainable Asset Management:

- Evaluate and make recommendations on how water and wastewater infrastructure assets should be managed with regard to short and long term maintenance and replacement

Cost to complete the study required by this resolve is estimated to be approximately XXX.