

SCAS Public Meeting 04-20-2022

Call to Order/Member Roll Call

Mayor McTizic called the meeting to order, welcoming SCAS members and public participants. Mayor McTizic shared the meeting objectives, which will be a discussion on technical assistance for small communities and reminded members of the SCAS' mission.

SCAS members introduced themselves. [See list of attendees in Appendix A]

William Niebling, Associate Administrator, EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR), thanked Mayor McTizic for his leadership as the SCAS Vice Chair and welcomed SCAS members on behalf of EPA. Associate Administrator Niebling thanked SCAS members for their input on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Letter of Recommendation formally adopted by the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) February 2022 and mentioned that EPA will greatly benefit from SCAS recommendations addressing activities that the agency can take to support smaller communities access infrastructure funding, including opportunities to enhance technical assistance for local governments. Emphasis on such input is essential for EPA to meet the unique needs of small communities across the U.S. and will help BIL funding reach more cities.

EPA Presentations on Office of Water Resources for Small Communities

Addison Chau, EPA's Water Infrastructure & Resiliency Finance Center, introduced EPA's Water Finance Clearinghouse and walked through the web-based portal that helps communities locate information that assists in making informed decisions for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure needs. The Clearinghouse features two searchable databases that focuses on finding sources for water infrastructure projects and informational resources such as reports, weblinks, and webinars on financing mechanisms and approaches that can help communities assess capital to meet water infrastructure needs. Addison highlighted the benefits of using the Clearinghouse, including how to use system to search for resources, funding, and mapping for project identification.

Mary Fasano, EPA's Office of Water, presented information on EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Federal Credit Program. Significant features to the program involved:

- Minimum funding amounts for small communities (\$5mill); maximum portion of eligible projects that WIFIA can fund (49%); maximum time that repayment may be deferred after substantial completion of the project (5 years).
- New definition for rural communities (10,000 or less); Small communities (25,000 or less).
- Statutory directive for an outreach plan to expand small and rural community participation.
- Challenges/Opportunities to identify gaps, financial assistance limitations, loan underwriting criteria variances, and capacity.

Jonathan Nelson, Senior Advisor for Technical Assistance and Community Outreach, EPA's Office of Water presented information on technical assistance efforts for BIL funding.

Jonathan spoke to BIL implementation goals that target resources to disadvantaged communities, makes rapid progress on lead-free water for all, and tackles forever chemicals (such as PFAS). With the BIL implementation goals, technical assistance will be needed across rural, urban, and suburban disadvantaged communities. EPA's Office of Water targets for BIL technical assistance to:

- support underserved and disadvantaged communities to obtain State Revolving Fund (SRF) funding to improve various forms of water infrastructure,
- see greater numbers of disadvantaged communities move to SRF project priority lists, and
- seek close collaboration with the states to complement state technical assistance.

SCAS Discussion

Mayor McTizic opened the floor up for SCAS member discussion focusing on the following questions:

- What types of resources can EPA provide to help small communities to tap into these resources?
 - What are your top 1-2 T.A. needs in your communities?
 - What does good coordination look like between partners?
 - What are ways to shift burden off small and underserved communities so there are no barriers for them in requesting technical assistance?

Director Rodney Bartlett asked if there's any thought on how non-sustainable water systems is defined?

Jonathan Nelson mentioned that the question will be a continued conversation and communities the agency is trying to reach may not have been able to afford water infrastructure upgrades. The agency is aware that there's no point in having solutions that are not economically sustainable and it will be an ongoing conversation.

Mayor Vincent DeSantis commented on Gloversville NY rainstorm dropping 4 inches of rain one night (completely unprecedented) was a 200-year storm, but could now be a 2-year storm. How can cities like his redo the stormwater system to handle something like this? A technical assistance grant could give his city the means to do a study to figure out what we need to do to upgrade our stormwater systems. If a technical assistance grant is administered for this analysis, the city would then apply for a loan or additional funding. This method could be expensive but helpful to engage that.

Mayor McTizic echoed Mayor DeSantis. Bolivar, TN is working with the University of Tennessee for these analyses.

Director Dave Glatt mentioned that there's very small communities and towns with less than 10,000 and getting these areas to realize funding is available has been hard. Perhaps putting funds up for these communities could help reduce the burden. Also, developing a project today could then increase in cost later on or can't get a quote unless starting project ASAP. Some small communities have gone into despair because there's no funding or assistance to apply for funding.

Representative Christina Sablan mentioned that she conducted a quick search in the Water Finance Clearinghouse for resources in her location and there are none. She emphasized the need to include U.S. territories and the facets of issues experienced with remote islands.

Councilmember Daniel Guzman King echoed Rep. Sablan's comment on inclusion and suggested that EPA should continue to have conversation with Tribal Leaders on best practices for technical assistance. Councilmember Guzman also mentioned EPA meeting with Tribal consortiums around the U.S. to present this information so that it can be disseminated to various Tribal governments and organizations.

(Public Commenter) Lynn Zender, Executive Director for Zender Environmental Health and Research Group mentioned her work with small, rural and isolated communities in Alaska and offered comments for the SCAS to consider emphasizing that:

- EPA must fix infrastructure,
- Small communities in Alaska, including 200 Tribes, are excluded from existing EPA wastewater systems,
- Infrastructure matching sanitary landfills can be done cheaper, and
- Nonprofits need to be included

Business Items

DFO Barnes reminded members that the SCAS and LGAC will host a hybrid meeting June 23 & 24, 2022 in Washington DC. Logistics are outlined in the LGAC/SCAS Weekly Digest and Portia Banks is the contact person for any questions.

Meeting Adjournment

Mayor McTizic thanked SCAS members, EPA presenters and the public for the participation and closed the meeting.

Appendix

List of SCAS Members in Attendance

The Honorable Julian McTizic (Vice Chair)
Mayor
Bolivar, TN

The Honorable Vincent DeSantis
Mayor
Gloversville, NY

Mr. Rodney Barlett
Director of Public Works
Peterborough, NH

Mr. Dave Glatt
Director, Department of Environmental Quality
Bismarck, ND

The Honorable Daniel Guzman
Councilmember
Oneida Nation, WI

The Honorable Hattie Portis-Jones
Councilmember
Fairburn, GA

The Honorable Christina Sablan
Representative
Mariana Islands

The Honorable Jeremy Stutsman*
Mayor
Goshen, IN

EPA Attendees

Lynzi Barnes, SCAS Designated Federal Officer, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Paige Lieberman, LGAC Designated Federal Officer EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

William Niebling, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Jack Bowles, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Andrea Barbery, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Jamie Piziali, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Arnita Hannon, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Andrew Hanson, EPA Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Jonathan Nelson, EPA Office of Water

Mary Fasano, EPA Office of Water

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Addison Chau, EPA Office of Water

Jim Gebhardt, EPA Office of Water

Public Attendees

Michael Dexter, Southeast Sustainability Directors Network

Lynn Zender, Zender Environmental Health and Research Group

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