

FY 2025

Clean Water Indian Set-Aside Program Fact Sheet



What is CWISA?

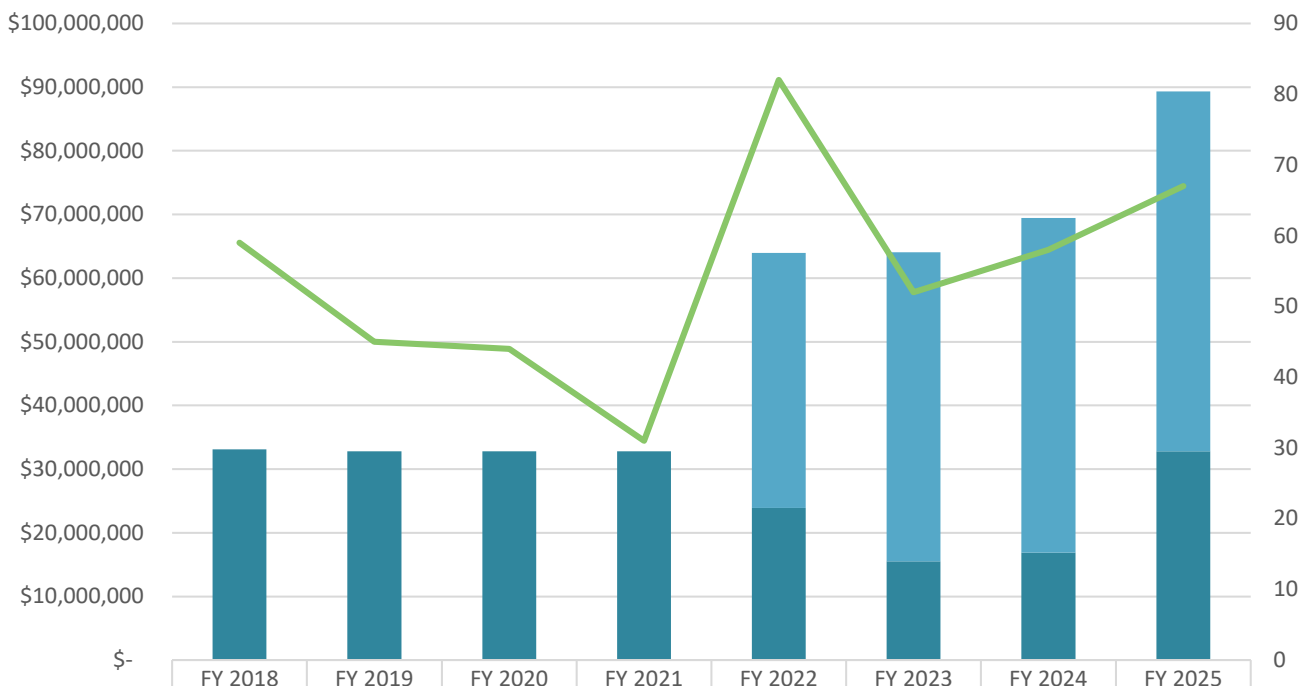
The Clean Water Indian Set-Aside (CWISA) program protects public health and the environment by improving wastewater sanitation facilities for tribal communities. The 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) established the CWISA program. Section 518 of the CWA, as amended by the 2014 Water Resources Reform & Development Act, governs the program and allows the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide funding for the planning, design, and construction of wastewater treatment plant facilities that serve federally recognized Indian tribes, Alaska Native Villages (ANV), and certain tribes in Oklahoma.

Since inception, EPA has administered the CWISA program in close cooperation with the Indian Health Service (IHS) Sanitation Facilities Construction program. The ten EPA Regions are responsible for the administration of the regional CWISA programs, and EPA Headquarters provides national program coordination, oversight, and policy direction. EPA Regions use the IHS Sanitation Deficiency System (SDS) database to identify projects for CWISA program funds.

CWISA Funding Levels

In FY 2025, the CWISA program received \$89,337,000 through annual congressional appropriations and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

CWISA Program Impact



Case Study: Moving Bed Bio-film Reactor, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa



The previous wastewater treatment lagoon had high water seepage (above), necessitating improvements to the system to protect natural resources. Below, a new forcemain is installed from the new lift station to the MBBR wastewater treatment facility.



The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, located about 220 miles north of Madison, Wisconsin operated a four-cell lagoon wastewater treatment facility to treat and dispose of wastewater generated throughout the reservation. Over time, increased hydraulic loading from the community and high groundwater infiltration into the seepage cells (see photo) warranted the need for improvements to the system.

Through the CWISA program, the Lac Du Flambeau Band received \$1,248,000 from the EPA to construct a Moving Bed Bio-film Reactor (MBBR) to supplement treatment of the sewage. The improvements also included the construction of a new 3-cell seepage cell system for discharge, abandonment of the old 2-cell seepage cells, the construction of a new control building and relining the secondary treatment cell to protect the groundwater from exfiltration. The Band also installed a UV disinfection system for the effluent to further protect the groundwater. The project addressed violations related to groundwater and treatment cell elevation separation, allowable lagoon seepage rates, and excessive phosphorous. The new MBBR system represents a positive impact on the public health for 579 homes directly served, as well as protecting the groundwater in the region by removing nitrogen and biosolids from community wastewater and disinfecting the effluent prior to discharge.

Case Study Data Source: Indian Health Service Sanitation Deficiency System

Case Study: Ashland Lagoon System Renovation, Northern Cheyenne Reservation

Renovation has been completed for the Ashland lagoon system, serving the Tribal Community of Ashland on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, approximately 100 miles east of Billings, Montana. The existing 2-cell sewage lagoon system, which was constructed in the 1970's, was both unlined and overgrown with vegetation and trees. Geotechnical data indicated that gravelly soils in the area permitted rapid infiltration and did not allow adequate retention time, allowing raw sewage to permeate into the ground and contaminate the local Tongue River. Seasonally, the water table rose to within three feet of cell bottoms, further imperiling the system.

EPA contributed \$325,888 to improve the Ashland lagoon wastewater treatment system. The project constructed a new, clay-lined primary lagoon that is less vulnerable to geological and hydraulic risks. The old two-cell lagoon system was cleaned of vegetation, combined into a single cell, and lined with bentonite reducing the risk of leaking sewage. It now serves as a large secondary lagoon cell, increasing the efficiency of the whole system. The project enhances protection of the environment and serves 41 homes in the community, ensuring they have access to safe, efficient wastewater treatment.

Case Study Data Source: Indian Health Service Sanitation Deficiency System



The renovation cleared the vegetation from the lagoon, resealing this cell and constructing another.



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