



FUNDING FOR REQUIRED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS FOR SMALL RURAL MUNICIPALITIES

Issue:

Garrett County is Maryland's westernmost county in the Allegheny Mountains of Appalachia. It is home to 30,000 residents and consists of eight small towns ranging in population from 305 to 2,298. While the towns and County do their absolute best to provide required infrastructure for sewer and water that meet federal and state standards, the lack of funding for these projects creates nearly insurmountable odds for this rural community. Garrett County and its small municipalities, like other rural communities, must receive substantial financial support to develop and maintain required sewer and water infrastructure.

Background:

Currently, three municipalities in Garrett County must build or upgrade water or sewer infrastructure according to federal and state guidelines. None of these municipalities have the necessary funds and their populations are too small to generate the money through taxes. Grantsville, Mountain Lake Park and Loch Lynn require federal funding assistance for these essential infrastructure projects.

Grantsville Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Town of Grantsville is located in north-central Garrett County, Maryland. The town is about 30 miles northeast of Oakland, 20 miles west of Cumberland and accessible via US Route 40, Maryland Route 495 and 669 as well as Interstate 68. It is home to the historic Little Crossings and the Casselman River. The Casselman River Bridge area contains a Maryland State Park, an area for parking, picnic tables and information on local history. This is also the location of the Grantsville Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), although the plant is located in a separate fenced area accessible via a locked gate.

The Grantsville WWTP was built in 1989. An addition was made in 1995 to accommodate flow from the Chestnut Ridge and Jennings collection systems. It serves 258 residential customers and 54 commercial customers. Grantsville has been very pro-active in maintaining and operating their WWTP. However, substantial upgrades are needed to stay in compliance with increasing restrictions.

The town has been meeting with state primacy agency Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) as well as USDA RUS personnel and Maryland Environmental Service to help the town to understand issues and concerns, operational changes that may benefit the system as well as to explore funding opportunities. Due to the lack of necessary funds, the upgrades cannot be constructed and, to add insult to injury, the town is being penalized for non-compliance. So far, this small rural community has accrued \$32,700 in penalties. This is only compounding the issue. Grantsville must receive federal funding assistance to begin the project without further delay.





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Mountain Lake Park & Loch Lynn Heights Water Distribution System

The Mountain Lake Park & Loch Lynn Heights (MLP/LLH) water distribution system provides water service to 1,044 residential and commercial customers in the towns of Mountain Lake Park and Loch Lynn Heights, Maryland. The MLP/LLH water supply and water distribution system date back to 1900 and was allowed to grow and expand from that time without adequate planning or standardization. As a result, the MLP/LLH water distribution system is comprised of multiple pipe materials and has many sections served via small diameter (<= 2") water mains. Fire protection, via fire hydrants, is inadequate in many sections of the MLP/LLH distribution system.

Because of the age and mix of pipe material, the MLP/LLH water distribution system has been plagued with significant water loss issues and dirty water complaints. Garrett County has been able to reduce water loss from 45% to near 30%. This has been done by working with Maryland Rural Water and the purchase of leak detection equipment. However, searching for and repairing leaks has become a never-ending process for Garrett County staff. An interconnection exists between the MLP/LLH water distribution system and the Oakland water distribution system. In the past several years, the Oakland water system has provided water with increasing frequency to maintain water service to customers during periods when system loss overcomes production capacity.

In 2017, Garrett County was awarded a SEARCH Grant from USDA-RUS for the completion of preliminary engineering report and environmental report (PER/ER) for the rehabilitation of the MLP/LLH water distribution system. A contract for this work was awarded to The EADS Group (EADS) and they have submitted the final draft of the PER/ER to USDA for review. A total distribution system replacement is the preferred alternative designated in the PER/ER. EADS has recommended a phased approach in the PER/ER, the first of which would be conducting a complete hydraulic analysis of the water distribution system and the full engineering design of a new water distribution system to serve Mountain Lake Park and Loch Lynn Heights.

Cost Estimate

Phase 1 Design	\$ 1,220,980
Phase 2 Construction	\$ 6,796,560
Phase 3 Construction	\$ 5,545,970
Phase 4 Construction	\$ 7,259,655
<u>Phase 5 Construction</u>	<u>\$ 4,817,810</u>
Grand Total	\$25,640,975

Neither town has the resources to build the new system and can barely cover the existing maintenance for this antiquated, poorly functioning system. The situation has become dire and federal assistance is needed to ensure the residents of these two small rural towns have adequate, clean water.





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Mountain Lake Park Pensinger Water Quality Improvement Project

The development in the area surrounding Pensinger Boulevard and Heritage Drive in the Town of Mountain Lake Park (MLP), Maryland, has historically seen problems with runoff pooling or flooding yards and basements. When this development was built years ago, storm water standards were quite different than they are today. There is a partial system of existing storm drains that are not sized adequately or located properly to handle and convey the amount of runoff in the development. The Pensinger Water Quality Improvement Project has been designed according to EPA standards to retrofit the existing system along with new features and structures to improve conditions in the development and address problem areas of runoff and also improve the quality of the runoff contributed downstream. The new system has been designed with current State storm water guidelines and ideals in mind.

The proposed project has been designed to retrofit and add additional elements to an existing storm drain system serving the development in the area surrounding Pensinger Boulevard and Heritage Drive in MLP. This development has approximately 40 residences. The system of underground storm drains will be used to convey runoff from up to the 10-year storm event. The new system of storm drains will redirect runoff through approximately 1700 LF of various sized HOPE pipe (12" to 36"), to a new discharge point that is located further downstream to help prevent continuing overflows at the current discharge location.

The existing development around this project limits the space available for use for storm water features and structures. In the planning phase, additional items and locations were discussed such as gravel recharge beds and additional bioretention areas, among others but were not included for cost and land acquisition complications. This design addresses the necessary conveyance and incorporates water quality improving features within the existing land constraints.

The design and planning were completed years ago but the project stalled due to lack of funding. Additional design and planning will need to be completed to ensure all aspects are up-to-date. The total cost of the project is approximately \$1,129,229 but with three major infrastructure projects on the priority list for Mountain Lake Park, the storm water project cannot be completed without federal assistance.

Action Requested:

The federal government must provide financial assistance to construct these required infrastructure projects for these small towns so that the municipalities are not bankrupt and the residents are not paying outrageous taxes. Small rural communities require the same infrastructure as their urban counterparts but do not have the same means and resources to develop these necessary projects. Residents bear the brunt of the burden through property taxes and by personally paying for connections to public lines and maintenance on their lands. However, as infrastructure ages and federal guidelines become more stringent, the municipalities and their residents lag behind in development and updates. The high price tags that come with these projects are preventive and can only be accomplished with federal assistance.

