



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region 1
5 Post Office Square, Suite 100
Boston, MA 02109-3912

Re: The Health of Your Buried Water Infrastructure Will Ensure the Health of Your Community

Dear Budget Official/Financial Committee:

Municipal officials have seen great benefit from programs that assess the condition of their infrastructure assets and from developing sustainable user rates based on keeping those assets in good condition. These programs preserve the value of the billions of dollars worth of water and wastewater assets that have been constructed with EPA, state, and municipal investments over more than forty years. These investments across the nation have improved the quality of our water, our lakes, rivers and streams. The water pollution control program has been extremely successful in restoring our nation's waters and we should all be proud of what we have accomplished.

One of the greatest challenges we face is sustaining our investment. So much of the process of wastewater collection and treatment takes place out of sight, as much of our infrastructure is underground and out of public view. Many of Massachusetts' treatment facilities have now reached their expected design life, and many sewer systems have exceeded their life expectancy. As our valuable infrastructure begins to show its age, it becomes critically important to engage in preventive maintenance activities and to conduct capital planning activities. The enclosed brochure spells out the tasks and provides some insight into programs to ensure sustainability of your underground infrastructure.

The costs of infrastructure maintenance and repair can be high, but these costs will only continue to mount as aging infrastructures continue to erode. With the average cost to replace a major sewer line at one million dollars per mile, wastewater collection and treatment facilities can be the most expensive infrastructure for many communities. When these systems fail due to age or maintenance issues, fines can add to the cost of repair or replacement. We hope that you will take a proactive approach to addressing and improving your community's wastewater treatment system by providing adequate funding during this upcoming budget cycle. Some of the most difficult challenges facing local wastewater facilities are balancing the need to sustain infrastructure while also financing new equipment and capital facilities.

MassDEP and EPA will continue to reach out to local officials to stress the importance and value of properly maintaining wastewater infrastructure. Viable and reliable infrastructure is also critical to the local economy. While there is little glamour in discussing a community's wastewater needs, we trust that the sentiment among the local officials and citizenry of Massachusetts is one of support for this basic need of public health and clean waterways.

Sincerely,

Susan Studlien, Director
Office of Environmental Stewardship
U.S. EPA - New England Region

cc: MA DEP