

## **Results of the October 2014 outreach survey for the awareness of the Environmental Loans programs: Small Loan Program, Clean Water Fund Program, and Safe Drinking Water Loan Program**

Below are highlighted results from the Small Loan Program and Environmental Loan Outreach Survey. Direct questions about this survey and the Small Loans Program to Michelle Eis at 608-267-0490 or [michellem.eis@wisconsin.gov](mailto:michellem.eis@wisconsin.gov).

### **Reasons municipalities have not applied for Environmental Improvement Fund loans:**

- 39% - unaware that these opportunities existed
- 20% - federal requirements are too onerous
- 18% - Not in need of funding
- 15% - Not enough financial benefit to make project viable
- 15% - Received funding elsewhere

### **Awareness of municipalities of Environmental Improvement Fund finance opportunities:**

- 88% - Clean Water Fund Program
- 71% - Safe Drinking Water Loan Program
- 32% - Principle Forgiveness
- 28% - Clean Water Fund Program, Small Loan Program

### **Reasons municipalities have not applied for an Interest Rate Subsidy through the Small Loan Program:**

- 49% - unaware
- 22% - Not in need of funding
- 14% - Received funding elsewhere
- 13% - Total project costs were over \$1mill

### **Likelihood that municipalities will apply for an Interest Rate Subsidy Agreement in the future:**

- 53% - likely
- 37% - neutral
- 9% - not likely

### **Ways municipalities have become aware of finance opportunities:**

- 37% - Word of mouth (specified in the following result)
- 29% - DNR website
- 27% - DNR Environmental Loan E Bulletin

**People who made municipalities aware of these opportunities:**

- 66% Consultants
- 32% - DNR Staff
- 23% - Someone from within the muni

**Factors that have prevented consultants from assisting municipal officials apply for an Interest Rate Subsidy through the Small Loan Program:**

- 48% - muni did not request it
- 39% - total project costs greater than \$1mill
- 37% - Received funding elsewhere
- 37% - Able to obtain similar or better finance elsewhere
- 15% - Unaware of SLP

**Likelihood that consultants will recommend the Small Loan Program to a municipality:**

- 75% - likely
- 22% - neutral
- 4% - unlikely

**Comments regarding usefulness of the Environmental Improvement Fund program:**

- Cost of applying is not economical due to the complexity of the application process
- Frustration with federal requirements
- Need for a decrease in “market rate” or increase in subsidy

*DNR response to comments:*

*Simplification of the application process* – We are in the process of making the Intent to Apply (ITA) and Priority Evaluation Ranking Form (PERF) process online.

*Federal Requirements* – While we are unable to waive federal requirements, we are looking at ways to streamline the process including the creation of a single certification form for all federal requirements. For eligible Clean Water Fund projects that are under \$1mill (and \$2mill by SFY17), the Small Loan Program is available and does not impose federal requirements because it is state funded.

*Decrease in Market Rate* –Effective January 1, 2015, the WI Department of Administration has lowered the market rate for which Safe Drinking Water Fund and Clean Water Fund program subsidies are based. The new market rate is now 3%. Clean Water Fund Program loans, subsidized at 75% of the market rate will now be awarded with an interest rate of 2.2%; Safe Drinking Water Loan Program loans subsidized at 33% of the market rate will now be awarded with an interest rate of .99%, and those subsidized at 55% of the market rate will now be awarded with an interest rate of 1.65%.

### Suggestions for getting information to you more effectively:

- Make it easier to find on the DNR website
- Provide trainings and webinars
- Most participant were happy with emails and E bulletin list serve; constructive comments included:
  - Provide emails without legal jargon
  - Make emails more catchy so they are not deleted by accident
- Present program information at upcoming conferences
- Other outreach ideas suggested:
  - submit articles to professional society journals and trade magazines
  - brownbag luncheons
  - workshops to discuss the program in various locations around the state
  - would like to see us advertise these funds as ways to implement green infrastructure or other pilot programs to meet phosphorus limits or TMDLs
  - Start a program for municipalities to deal with NR-102 Phosphorus

#### *DNR response to suggestions:*

*Accessibility of DNR website* – There is now a link on the DNR HOME PAGE for DNR Environmental Grants and loans!

*Provide trainings and webinars* –Webinars coming soon! Watch for them in E bulletins.

February 12, 2015 – Webinar: Use of American Iron & Steel

*Improving email correspondence* –To enhance our email correspondence, we are working on creating email templates that provide clear, concise, and consistent information to our customers about our program. When responding to questions via email, I like to reference the code or statute so that I can more easily explain how I came up with my answer. If ever you would like further clarification, you are encouraged to ask follow up questions or request a phone

*Conferences* –We will be presenting program information at the following conferences:

February 19, 2015 - Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) Emergency Preparedness Seminar

February 26, 2015 –Governmental Affairs Committee Meeting

March 24-26, 2015 – Wisconsin Rural Water Association Conference

Other conferences we plan to attend will be announced in the E bulletin

*Journal Articles* –There have been articles on the topic of State Revolving Fund in national journals.

*Advertising as funds for green infrastructure* –Our green project reserve specialist will be submitting an article in the E bulletin regarding this topic.

*Program for Phosphorus* –We currently have a zero percent loan for phosphorus pilot projects!