

FOR RELEASE: March 1, 2012
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**Ohio EPA Offers Communities Financial Help
To Improve Drinking Water Safety**

Ohio EPA is accepting nominations from communities that want to receive funding for drinking water-related infrastructure projects. Nominations to receive funding through the Drinking Water Assistance Fund are due on March 15, 2012.

Using the Drinking Water Assistance Fund, Ohio EPA has leveraged just over \$76 million into more than \$300 million toward improving water infrastructure throughout the state in the last 15 years.

“Ohio EPA is committed to working with communities across the state to help improve Ohio’s public drinking water systems,” said Ohio EPA Director Scott J. Nally. “I am pleased to see my Agency develop long-standing relationships with community leaders and provide support, both technical and financial, for their long-term drinking water projects.”

The Drinking Water Assistance Fund supports projects to build new drinking water systems in areas of existing need, expand and upgrade existing systems to improve public health, assist communities to meet and maintain Safe Drinking Water Act requirements and provide assistance to economically challenged areas of the state.

After receiving nominations, Ohio EPA ranks projects to receive funding so that systems with the most serious risks to public health will be addressed first. Other considerations include, but are not limited to, compliance with federal and state drinking water rules and economic affordability. Some of the money Ohio EPA issues to communities of all sizes is offered as ultra-low-interest (2 percent or less) loans with a 20-year term.

A number of small communities qualify for disadvantaged community status where principal forgiveness is offered as an additional benefit. In these cases, the community does not have to repay the portion of the loan that Ohio EPA has forgiven. For example, in Southeastern Ohio, the Burr Oak Regional Water District is constructing a water line and 900,000-gallon storage tank. The total project cost is \$2.1 million. Ohio EPA was able to provide a 20-year loan at 2 percent interest and forgive \$425,430 of the principal. This allowed the water district to borrow \$1.7 million to complete a more than \$2 million project.

The Agency will evaluate nominations and prepare the list of communities that are eligible to receive funding for program year 2013, which starts on July 1, 2012. To be considered for funding, drinking water-related infrastructure projects must be on this list. Communities that want to be considered for a disadvantaged community loan must also apply for that program by March 15, 2012. Assistance is available for completing both forms.

For more information about the Drinking Water Assistance Fund or to obtain a nomination or disadvantaged community application, visit www.epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/financialassistance.aspx.

