

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Information Collection Request

Title: Information Collection Request for the Clean Watersheds Needs Survey (Renewal)

OMB Control Number: 2040-0050

EPA ICR Number: 0318.14

Abstract: The Clean Watersheds Needs Survey (CWNS) is required by the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 516(b)(1)(B) as well as CWA section 609, which was added by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), P.L. 117-58, November 15, 2021. It is a periodic inventory of existing and planned publicly owned wastewater conveyance and treatment, combined sewer overflow correction, stormwater management and other water pollution control infrastructure in the United States, as well as an estimate of how much of this infrastructure may need to be repaired or upgraded. The CWNS also asked for information regarding new infrastructure that is needed. The CWNS is a joint effort between the EPA and the states. The CWNS collects cost and technical data from states that is associated with POTWs and other water pollution control facilities, existing and planned. The respondents who provide this information to the EPA are state and territory agencies responsible for environmental pollution control (states) and local facility contacts who provide documentation to the states (facilities).

No confidential information is used, nor is sensitive information protected from release under the Public Information Act. The EPA achieves national consistency in the final results through the application of uniform guidelines and validation techniques.

Supporting Statement A

1. NEED AND AUTHORITY FOR THE COLLECTION

Per Clean Water Act (CWA) section 516(b)(1)(B), the EPA must provide “a detailed estimate, biennially revised, of the cost of construction of all needed publicly owned treatment works in all of the States and of the cost of construction of all needed publicly owned treatment works in each of the States.”

Per the CWA, the CWNS was initially conducted every two years. In 1994, a survey was mandated for the collection of drinking water infrastructure needs. Therefore, after the completion of the CWNS 1992, the CWNS was conducted every four years, alternating with the drinking water needs survey. The next survey will be the 18th since the enactment of the CWA in 1972. The last CWNS collection occurred in 2022.

2. PRACTICAL UTILITY/USERS OF THE DATA

Congress utilizes the data collected in the CWNS to assist deliberations on specific legislation and funding measures related to water pollution control. Additional uses of the data include:

- Local, state, and other uses of the data for NPDES permit writing, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analyses, and other environmental program support,

- Wastewater treatment technology and environmental measures support related to the EPA's Sustainable Infrastructure Initiative,
- Private efforts to target technical support for facilities,
- Baseline data for the EPA, Department of Homeland Security, and other agencies for use in more specialized reports and for providing program focus,
- Development of the allotment formula for the new EPA Overflow and Stormwater Grant program, and
- Data used by professional industry groups and academia as the only comprehensive review of all capital needs for wastewater and stormwater infrastructure in the United States.

At the end of each CWNS, the EPA develops a Report to Congress highlighting the national results of the survey and describing the methodology used to collect, document, and quality assure all of the state data included therein. The appendices of the Report are detailed state-by-state and national summary tables. In addition, the EPA makes the data available to the public via a CWNS dashboard and they are integrated into a number of other EPA data platforms. Past Reports and data are publicly available at <http://www.epa.gov/cwns/>.

3. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The EPA uses current technology to complete the CWNS. Since 1988, the CWNS review and update processes have been computerized to reduce the workload for the states and Regions in collecting and updating facility data. For the 2022 survey, the EPA made additional enhancements to the data entry portal to streamline data entry, including:

- Restructuring data entry flow to allow users to work on similar sections sequentially,
- Splitting submission of data for the facility information and needs, allowing the review process to start sooner on submitted elements while states wait for data to fill in other information,
- Changing the page layout to a scrolling design up to reduce page load time,
- Reducing the total number of data elements,
- Using conditional branching to create an efficient path through the survey based on previous inputs,
- Providing a NPDES link for CWNS numbers early in the survey and giving the user an option to pull data from ICIS NPDES in several places where possible, and
- Providing states a view that will quickly inform them of missing facilities in the network of conveyance and treatment facilities and/or unbalanced population estimates.

These enhancements will also be a part of the 18th CWNS.

In addition, the EPA reviews supporting documentation submitted by states to ensure that it is current and specific to the need being described. To that end, the CWNS specifies the following documentation requirements:

- A description of the current or potential water quality impairment or human health issue, or "problem,"
- The location of the problem,

- A description of the project that will solve the problem,
- The cost of each project,
- The source of the cost, and
- The total cost for all projects that address the problem.

In addition to these criteria, the CWNS required that documents must be current (i.e., published within the prior six years) and establishes document types that are pre-approved for use in documenting needs and related costs. Cost estimation tools are utilized to estimate costs for documented needs that do not have documented costs.

4. EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION

The EPA avoids duplication of effort in several ways. States and the EPA Regions are informed of the data and document update procedures during CWNS state trainings and through a provided user manual.

A new data entry portal was developed for the 2022 CWNS and will be used for the 18th CWNS. This portal limits duplication of effort through the ability to:

- Transfer wastewater discharge permit and location data from the ICIS NPDES database,
- Import facility and contact information for facilities existing from the past survey.

System enhancements for the 18th CWNS will assist in preventing duplicative efforts by providing upfront validation checks to prevent users from having to re-enter data based on a validation check later in the survey. Data quality assurance methods have also been streamlined to require less respondent time while preserving data quality assurance.

5. MINIMIZING BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES AND SMALL ENTITIES

The primary respondents are the states, usually the state water pollution control agency or the department of environmental protection. States need to gather small community needs, however, the EPA wants to minimize the burden to these communities. The majority of small communities have wastewater needs. Therefore, instead of requesting documentation from all small communities, the EPA proposes to sample 500 small publicly owned treatment works (POTWs) with a design capacity less than 1 MGD to estimate wastewater needs of small communities (see Part B). This will reduce the overall burden to this subset of small communities.

For small communities that have non-wastewater needs, the EPA allows them to submit a simplified form (provided by the states or EPA) in lieu of independent documentation based on the presumption that these communities may not reasonably meet CWNS need documentation requirements.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF LESS FREQUENT COLLECTION

Failure to conduct the CWNS every four years could put the EPA in the position of being unable to respond in a timely and accurate manner to CWA mandates. Additionally, the data requires regular updates to support the variety of additional uses described at the end of Section 2.

7. GENERAL GUIDELINES

The CWNS follows OMB's general guidelines and does not ask respondents to:

- Report information to the Agency more often than quarterly;
- Prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of a request;
- Submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- Retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;
- Participate in a statistical survey that is not designed to produce data that can be generalized to the universe of the study;
- Utilize a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- Receive a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- Submit proprietary, trade secret, or other confidential information unless the Agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CONSULTATIONS

8a. Public Comment

In compliance with the 1995 PRA, the EPA will solicit public comments for a 30-day period to determine realistic burden estimates for respondents.

During the previous comment period (published March 11, 2024, 89 FR 17464, pages 17464-17465), the EPA received a comment detailing challenges with collecting and reporting stormwater needs. Although the reported 2022 stormwater needs were significantly higher than in past surveys, the EPA understands the difficulty of documenting and reporting needs for stormwater projects, which are typically smaller, more varied, and less documented than wastewater projects. This also applies to the nonpoint source control and decentralized wastewater treatment projects. The EPA is committed to streamlining the data entry process to the greatest extent possible in order help states most efficiently capture documented needs. The EPA plans to make improvements to the data entry portal to better accommodate non-wastewater infrastructure types and continue to improve its usability. The EPA is also dedicated to improving training and resources for state coordinators in addition to maintaining continuity of data collection to avoid the loss of institutional knowledge and data networks that occurred between the 2012 and 2022 CWNS data collection timeframes.

The EPA received another comment reiterating previously reported issues on collecting small community needs (refer to section 8(b)) that proposed implementing a "probabilistic approach." Per this suggestion, the EPA has outlined a statistical method (see Part B of this ICR), to better capture the needs of small POTWs and reduce the burden on the state respondents.

8b. Consultations

Prior to the 2022 CWNS, the EPA consulted nine states to estimate the total amount of time it takes them to update the information for one facility, as well as estimate the percentage of that time they spent on each activity. The states confirmed at that time that the previous estimate of 1.47 hours to update and submit data for one facility was correct. In 2023, at the conclusion of the 2022 survey, 56 state coordinators and their contractors provided feedback about the 2022 CWNS. This feedback confirmed that this estimate was generally correct for an average on a per facility basis. This activity burden has been retained in this ICR for technical data and needs entries.

State coordinators indicated that gathering technical data and needs documentation from small community contacts via a webform was difficult. Many states indicated having more success with one-on-one phone calls with the contacts to walk them through the form. This approach meant that the overall effort of collecting data from small communities required much more time than previous estimates, EPA is proposing to estimate needs for POTWs with a design flow less than 1 MGD (which contain the majority of estimable needs from small communities) using a statistical approach (see Part B).

9. PAYMENTS OR GIFTS TO RESPONDENTS

No payments or gifts to respondents are involved in this information collection.

10. ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

No confidential information will be collected that falls within the types of confidential data protected from release under the Public Information Act. However, the survey does ask for personally identifying information (PII). For example, the CWNS collects the name and title of individuals associated with their entries, and work addresses and phone numbers as optional fields. This information will not be included in the public data downloads. Any respondent that considers this information to be of a confidential nature may request that such information be treated as confidential. All confidential data will be handled in accordance with 40 CFR 122.7, 40 CFR part 2, and the EPA's Security Manual part III, chapter 9, dated August 9, 1976.

11. JUSTIFICATION FOR SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

No sensitive questions pertaining to private or personal information, such as sexual behavior or religious beliefs, are included in this information collection.

12. RESPONDENT BURDEN HOURS & LABOR COSTS

12a. Respondents/NAICS Codes

The primary respondents for the CWNS will be 56 states and territories.

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) information for the facility respondents affected by this collection activity are as follows:

Description	Group Number	Industry Number
Administration of Air and Water Resource and Solid Waste Management Programs	924	924110
Sewage Plants and Collection Systems	221	221320
City, Town, County Executive Offices	921	921110

12b. Information Requested

The types of data that will be collected relate to wastewater infrastructure and the costs thereof, including publicly owned wastewater treatment and conveyance systems that need to be built or upgraded to control wastewater, stormwater, nonpoint source discharges, decentralized systems, and combined sewer/sanitary sewer overflows.

Respondents will utilize an online data entry portal to submit information. Appendix A includes screenshots of the data entry portal.

The survey will collect information in the following data areas:

- Facility/Change Type
- Permit
- Point of Contact
- Location
- Population
- Flow
- Discharge
- Effluent
- Unit Processes
- Asset management
- Needs
- Areas Related to Needs
- Cost Model Inputs

This collection does not require record keeping by respondents as all data and documentation will be submitted to the EPA for review and archiving.

12c. Respondent Activities

States will be inputting and submitting CWNS information and conducting the following activities that are not customary and usual business practice.

- Obtain access & training for the data entry portal
- Work with primary data suppliers
- Compile data from data suppliers
- Conduct data entry and document review

- Conduct data quality assurance

States and EPA will ask facilities for limited information to be able to complete the survey. Therefore, facilities will be asked to submit documents, but they will not be entering data into the data entry portal.

Collection Schedule

The 18th CWNS data collection and entry period is dependent on the completion date of the data collection stage of the Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment (DWINSA). The two surveys have historically been staggered to not overburden states’ resources with data collection. Presuming the DWINSA’s data collection is completed per the existing schedule, the CWNS data collection and entry period is estimated to be January 5, 2026^a through January 4, 2027. Data quality assurance and analysis activities will be performed January 2027 through April 2027. The Report to Congress will be developed and submitted to OMB for review in Fall 2027. If the DWINSA schedule is delayed, the CWNS survey also will be delayed accordingly.

12d. Respondent Burden Hours and Labor Costs

Facilities

There is only one activity for facilities: responding to state inquiries for data and/or documentation of needs. The estimates for the time for facilities to respond to requests from states is 0.33 hours for facilities documenting technical data and needs and 2 hours for POTWs under 1 MGD that are statistically sampled. POTWs under 1 MGD that are not statistically sampled will have no burden.

States

Table 12 -1 shows the activities states will conduct per facility and data entry type and the burden hours for each. States will not be gathering data in the statistical survey, which is covered under Agency burden.

Table 12-1. State Hours per Activity per Facility and Data Entry Type

Activity	Time Allocation (%) for Technical Data and Needs Entries	Burden Hours for Technical Data and Needs Entries	Time Allocation (%) for Technical Data Only Entries	Burden Hours for Technical Data Only Entries
Obtain access & training for the data entry portal	2%	0.03	2%	0.01
Work with primary data suppliers (local facilities)	43%	0.63	0%	0.00
Compile data from data suppliers	21%	0.31	0%	0.00
Conduct data entry & document submission	21%	0.31	88%	0.29

^a The actual date of the next survey is dependent on when the Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment (DWINSA) is scheduled. If the DWINSA is scheduled in 2025 or 2026, the CWNS may not begin until 2027.

Activity	Time Allocation (%) for Technical Data and Needs Entries	Burden Hours for Technical Data and Needs Entries	Time Allocation (%) for Technical Data Only Entries	Burden Hours for Technical Data Only Entries
Conduct data quality assurance activities	13%	0.19	10%	0.03
Total	100%	1.47	100%	0.33

Estimating Respondent Labor Costs

The average cost to states for staff compensation including salary and benefits is estimated to be \$59.90 per hour (Department of Labor, September 2023^b), the annual state burden hour estimate of 10,839 hours equates to annual state costs of \$649,249.

The average cost to local facilities of staff compensation and benefits is estimated to be \$59.90 per hour (Department of Labor, September 2023^c), the annual facility burden hour estimate of 2,503 hours equates to annual facility costs of \$149,959. There are no additional costs beyond costs associated with the above labor burden hour estimate. This information is summarized in Table 12 -2.

Estimating the Respondent Universe and Total Burden and Costs

The state respondent universe is 56 states and territories.

The facility respondent universe was determined by counting the total number of facilities that were updated in the prior survey or 30,881 facilities over the three-year period of this ICR. This value annualized is 10,294 facilities to be entered in by the 56 states and territories over the period of the ICR. Of those facilities, states had indicated that 11,330 (or 3,777 annually) had a flow of less than 1 MGD in the 2022 survey. Five hundred of these small facilities will be surveyed (see Part B), resulting in an annual number of 167 sampled facilities. Table 12 -2 and Table 12 -3 present the total respondent burden and costs based on this respondent universe.

^b ECEC State and Local Government Workers - 2004 to Present from <https://www.bls.gov/web/ecec.supp.toc.htm>, Period: September 2023. CMU301000000000D.

^c ECEC State and Local Government Workers - 2004 to Present from <https://www.bls.gov/web/ecec.supp.toc.htm>, Period: September 2023. CMU301000000000D.

Table 12-2. Annual Respondent Burden and Cost for Technical Data and Needs Entries

Activity	Hours and Costs Per State Respondent			Hours and Costs Per Facility Respondent			Total Annual		
	Labor Rate/Hr	Respondent Hrs/Year	Labor Cost/Year	Labor Rate/Hr	Respondent Hrs/Year	Labor Cost/Year	Respondents	Hours	Costs
1) Obtain access & training for the Data Entry Portal (DEP)	59.9	3.4	\$11,477	59.9	-	-	56	192	\$11,477
2) Work with primary data suppliers	59.9	73.6	\$246,752	59.9	-	-	56	4,119	\$246,752
3) Compile data from data suppliers	59.9	35.9	\$120,507	59.9	-	-	56	2,012	\$120,507
4) Conduct Data Entry & Document Submission	59.9	35.9	\$120,507	59.9	0.33	\$129,993	6,573	4,182	\$250,499
5) Conduct Data Quality Assurance Activities	59.9	22.2	\$74,599	59.9	-	-	56	1,245	\$74,599
Annual Totals		171	\$573,841		0.33	\$129,993	6,853	11,750	\$703,834
3-Year Totals		513	\$1,721,524		1	\$389,978	20,559	35,250	\$2,111,502

Table 12-3. Annual Respondent Burden and Cost for Technical Data only Entries and Statistical Sample

Activity	Hours and Costs Per State Respondent			Hours and Costs Per Facility Respondent for Statistical Sample			Total Annual		
	Labor Rate/Hr	Respondent Hrs/Year	Labor Cost/Year	Labor Rate/Hr	Respondent Hrs/Year	Labor Cost/Year	Respondents	Hours	Costs
1) Obtain access & training for the Data Entry Portal (DEP)	59.9	0.4	\$1,508	59.9	-	-	56	25	\$1,508
2) Work with primary data suppliers	59.9	0.0	\$0	59.9	-	-	56	0	\$0
3) Compile data from data suppliers	59.9	0.0	\$0	59.9	-	-	56	0	\$0
4) Conduct Data Entry & Document Submission	59.9	19.8	\$66,359	59.9	2.00	\$19,967	223	1,441	\$86,325
5) Conduct Data Quality Assurance Activities	59.9	2.2	\$7,541	59.9	-	-	56	126	\$7,541
Annual Totals		22	\$75,407		2	\$19,967	503	1,592	\$95,374
3-Year Totals		67	\$226,222		6	\$59,900	1,508	4,777	\$286,122

Bottom Line Burden Hours and Costs Tables

Respondent Tally

The total burden and costs for states and facility respondents is presented in Table 12-4.

Table 12-4. Bottom Line Burden Hours and Costs for Respondents

Respondent	Labor Hours / Respondent / Year	Number of Respondents	Labor Rate	Labor Respondent Hours	Total Labor Costs / Year
State - Technical Data and Needs	171.07	56	\$59.90 / hr.	9,580	\$573,841
State - Technical Data Only	22.48	56	\$59.90 / hr.	1,259	\$75,407
Facility - Technical Data and Needs	0.33	6,517	\$59.90 / hr.	2,170	\$129,993
Facility - Sampled	2.00	167	\$59.90 / hr.	333	\$19,967
Annual Total	195.88			13,342	\$799,208
3-Year Total	587.65			40,027	\$2,397,624

13. RESPONDENT CAPITAL AND O&M COSTS

The only respondent costs for this collection are labor costs. There are no capital or operations and maintenance costs associated with this collection.

14. AGENCY COSTS

14a. Agency Activities

Over four years, the EPA collects, reviews and summarized CWNS data in order to prepare the final Report to Congress. The Agency conducts the following activities:

- Contract Management
- Assistance to States
 - Promoting states' full participation in CWNS
 - Assisting states with data collection and methodologies
 - Assisting states in addressing states' submissions evaluated by the EPA as not meeting CWNS criteria
 - Arranging trainings for data collection
- Plan, Implement, & Manage Survey
 - Managing the survey and its data base to ensure national consistency
 - Setting national documentation standards and identifying data sources

- o Updating the database to keep it current and accurate
- Provide Logistics Support
- Refine Modeling Approaches
- Provide Data Entry Portal support
- Provide Technical Support
- Workgroup Facilitation & Support
- Provide Statistical Sample Support
 - o Determine sample frame and generate random sample
 - o Contact POTWs and perform virtual site visits
 - o Enter gathered data into the Data Entry Portal
 - o Analyze data and estimate total small POTW needs by state
 - o Perform quality assurance checks
- Review, Q/A, and Reconcile Data
 - o Reviewing documentation to ensure its acceptability and updating records
 - o Reviewing and approving new facility data submitted by the states
 - o Performing quality assurance checks on needs and population data
 - o Deleting needs estimates for facilities that cannot be properly documented in accordance with established documentation requirements
- Market and Promote CWNS
- Prepare Final Report
- Develop & Maintain Web Reports

14b. Agency Labor Cost

Agency costs were estimated by applying full time equivalent (FTE) hours to each activity and multiplying by an average yearly full-time compensation of an Agency employee^d, determined through using the 2024 GS salary rate schedule and applying a factor to account for benefits.

The annualized estimate for the total Agency labor cost is \$553,697. Table 14-1 shows Agency labor burden and cost by activity.

Table 14-5. Agency Burden and Cost

Activity	Agency Labor Hours / Year [FTE]	Agency Labor Costs / Year [\$190,930 / FTE]
Contract Management	0.3	\$57,279
Regional Assistance to States	0.35	\$66,826
Plan, Implement, & Manage Survey	0.3	\$57,279
Provide Logistics Support	0.05	\$9,547
Refine Modeling Approaches	0.05	\$9,547
Provide Data Entry Portal support	0.15	\$28,640

^d <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2024/DCB.pdf>

Activity	Agency Labor Hours / Year [FTE]	Agency Labor Costs / Year [\$190,930 / FTE]
Provide Technical Support	0.15	\$28,640
Workgroup Facilitation & Support	0.1	\$19,093
Run Statistical Survey	0.5	\$95,465
Review, Q/A, and Reconcile Data	0.1	\$19,093
Market and promote CWNS	0.3	\$57,279
Prepare Final Report	0.45	\$85,919
Develop & Maintain Web Reports	0.1	\$19,093
Annual Totals	2.9	\$553,697
3-Year Totals	8.7	\$1,661,092

14c. Agency Non-Labor Costs

Agency contactor costs were estimated based on actual pre-collection contract costs and prior survey estimates. The annualized estimate for the total non-labor cost is \$865,000. Table 14-2 shows Agency non-labor burden and cost by activity.

TABLE 14-2. AGENCY BURDEN AND COST

Activity	Contractor Costs / Year
Contract Management	\$18,000
Plan, Implement, & Manage Survey	\$55,000
Provide Logistics Support	\$27,000
Refine Modeling Approaches	\$55,000
Provide Data Entry Portal support	\$150,000
Provide Technical Support	\$70,000
Workgroup Facilitation & Support	\$35,000
Run Statistical Survey	\$125,000
Review, Q/A, and Reconcile Data	\$200,000
Market and promote CWNS	\$25,000
Prepare Final Report	\$45,000
Develop & Maintain Web Reports	\$60,000
Annual Totals	\$865,000
3-Year Totals	\$2,595,000

15) REASONS FOR CHANGE IN BURDEN

The prior burden approved by OMB (0318.13) was an annual burden of 9,645 hours and an annual cost of \$505,004 for non-Agency respondents. This ICR estimates an annual burden increase of 3,698 hours and \$294,204 in costs, for a total of 13,342 hours and \$799,208 in cost. This adjustment is based upon an increase in facility universe (likely due to the higher response rate in the previous survey), as well as an adjustment in labor rates and benefits. The prior ICR estimated that states would submit only half of their facilities (16,048). The majority of the states submitted most of their facilities in 2022 (30,881), almost doubling the estimated facility universe.

16) PUBLICATION OF DATA

The 18th CWNS data collection and entry period are dependent on the completion date of the data collection stage of the Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment (DWINSA). The two surveys have historically been staggered to not overburden states' resources with data collection. Presuming the DWINSA's data collection is completed per the existing schedule, the CWNS data collection and entry period will likely be in early 2027 and open for 12 months. Data quality assurance and analysis activities will be performed over approximately four months following the close of data collection. Data review includes a detailed comparison of reported populations served by publicly owned treatment works against the previous CWNS data and Census data for each state to check for potential double-counting or misreporting.

The Report to Congress will be developed and submitted to OMB once data review is complete. The 2022 CWNS Report to Congress timeline was approximately a year from development to submission. The Report highlights the national results of the survey and describes the methodology used to collect, document, and quality assure all the state data included therein. The appendices of the Report are detailed state-by-state and national summary tables. Upon approval by OMB, the EPA makes the data available to the public via an online dashboard. If the DWINSA schedule is delayed, the CWNS survey also will be delayed accordingly.

17) DISPLAY OF EXPIRATION DATE

The OMB Control Number and expiration date will be included on the home page of the Data Entry Portal.

18) CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

This information collection complies with all provisions of the Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.

