



Dear Environmental Advocate:

Thank you for your interest in protecting clean water in your community.

Aging infrastructure is costing us greatly. Whether it is a water main break impacting clean drinking water or a sewage overflow contaminating our water bodies, New York communities have been facing an increased number of clean water incidents.

When it comes to clean water and our aging infrastructure, New Yorkers need to send a strong and clear message — protecting our health and natural resources is a priority that cannot be overlooked. The New York State Comptroller has identified an \$800 million annual funding gap and we need lawmakers to provide more funding to local communities to #FixOurPipes.

Spreading the word in your community can make a difference! The attached toolkit can guide you through raising awareness on this issue that impacts you, your family, friends and neighbors.

Materials include:

- 5 steps to raise awareness and protect your community
- #FixOurPipes fact sheet
- Talking Points
- Tips for writing a letter to the editor
- Social media outreach

For more information or assistance, please contact Kristin Legere at 518-462-5526 ext. 242 or klegere@eany.org. Thank you again for taking a stand for clean water in your community.

Sincerely,

Peter M. Iwanowicz
Executive Director



**ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK**

YOUR GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG

#FixOurPipes Action Kit

353 Hamilton Street, Albany, New York 12210 •

Tel 518.462.5526 • Fax 518.427.0381

www.eany.org

#FixOurPipes Action Steps on Clean Water

Below are five action steps you can take that can help raise awareness to #FixOurPipes.

1. **Contact your state, county, town, or village legislators and leaders.** Whether you are familiar with your legislators or this is your first contact, sharing the enclosed fact sheet on #FixOurPipes can help inform them of how more state funding can help your community deal with its aging infrastructure.
2. **Ask officials to commit to support #FixOurPipes.** After you reach out to your officials, schedule a meeting to discuss. Meeting with them will help them understand the local impact of the issue and encourage them to also get involved. Ask your officials to commit to supporting an increase in state funding for communities to fix their pipes.
3. **Engage neighbors, friends, and community partners in your efforts.** Start raising awareness on the issue with your friends and neighbors; connect with groups you know of that want to ensure your community is protected from environmental dangers or reach out to new organizations. Highlight the dangers of water main breaks and sewage overflows, and if available, use local examples of how these are not just minor inconveniences, but community health hazards.
4. **Ask neighbors, friends, and community partners to share their story with us.** Ask your neighbors, friends, and community partners to share their story if they have been impacted by this issue. They can use the online form at www.eany.org/stories or use the enclosed form and return it to Environmental Advocates.
5. **Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.** Writing a letter to your newspaper on this issue can help inform legislators and the public, as well as illustrate how this issue impacts your community. Keep your letter short and to the point (250 words maximum), and use your own voice to share why your community should support #FixOurPipes.

#FixOurPipes Fact Sheet

The need for water infrastructure funding is great.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has stated that over the next twenty years, \$36 billion will need to be invested in water infrastructure for necessary repairs, replacements, and updates.

This year, communities requested more than \$6 billion for wastewater infrastructure projects alone.

DEC has stated that \$1 billion should be invested in sewer infrastructure annually, and the state Comptroller has identified that there is an \$800 million annual funding gap to meet that figure.

In the 2015-2016 State Budget, a New York State Water Grants program was created that would allocate \$200 million for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure projects spread out over three years. While the grant program is a good start, \$200 million is not nearly enough to meet the need.

Dated water infrastructure can lead to sewage overflows and water main breaks.

Water main breaks can cause drinking water to be contaminated, resulting in boil water alerts.

The city of Syracuse had 391 water main breaks in 2014, and 305 water main breaks so far in 2015.

On an annual basis, approximately 1.2 billion gallons of raw sewage are discharged into the Hudson River from Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) in the Capital Region; up to 4 billion gallons are discharged from CSOs in Buffalo into surrounding water bodies; and approximately 27 billion gallons is discharged from New York City CSOs into the New York Harbor alone.

Sewage pollutes our waters with pathogens, bacteria, heavy metals, excess nutrients, and other toxins. Exposure to pathogens found in sewage can cause diarrhea, vomiting, respiratory and other infections, hepatitis, dysentery, and various other diseases.

There are clear benefits to investing in water infrastructure.

- Investing in water infrastructure will allow for communities to attract new businesses and keep businesses in the community.
- Investing in water infrastructure will create jobs and help train new workers.
- Investing in water infrastructure will clean up our shared environment and improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

We need New York's continued leadership on water infrastructure by making a bigger investment

The New York State Water Grants program created in last year's budget creates an opportunity for additional funding in the 2016-2017 State Budget, and future budgets. At least \$800 million should be added to the grant program in the 2016-2017 State Budget.

#FixOurPipes Talking Points

- Clean water is an issue that impacts us all, right where we live. New York State needs to do more to help communities cope in 2016 and provide additional grant funding that protects clean water and prevents contamination from sewer overflows.
- DEC has stated that over the next 20 years \$36 billion will need to be invested in water infrastructure to make necessary repairs, replacements, and updates.
- Last year's state budget included \$200 million in grant funding for local communities to fix their pipes and repair aging water infrastructure. This money will be distributed to communities over a three year period.
- This year communities requested more than \$6 billion for wastewater infrastructure repairs alone.
- The New York State Comptroller has identified an \$800 million annual funding gap for wastewater infrastructure.
- Water main breaks can lead to contaminated drinking water, which can result in boil water alerts.
- Numerous communities are contending with contamination from sewage overflows because they are outfitted with aging combined sewer systems that carry storm water runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater together to a water treatment facility. When these facilities are over inundated, sewage can overflow into nearby waterbodies.
- When it comes to clean water and our aging infrastructure, New Yorkers need to send a strong and clear message — protecting our health and natural resources is a priority that cannot be overlooked.

#FixOurPipes Write a Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to your newspaper on this issue can help inform legislators and the public, and illustrate how continued funding will help protect clean water in your community.

Some tips for writing a letter to the editor include:

- Keep your letter short and to the point, no more than 250 words.
- Check with your local newspaper regarding guidelines for word limits and submission guidelines. These sections are typically under the 'Contact Us' tab of the outlet's website.
- Use your own voice – the talking points included in this toolkit can give you context but make it your own and add your point of view.
- Share a personal story about a local water incident to illustrate why this issue is important to you.
- Focus your letter on what matters most to you.
- Use the opening sentence to draw readers in, which will compel them to read further.
- Explain why the issue is important to you, and to New York State. State your opinion and what should be done (greater funding to #FixOurPipes).
- Avoid using jargon and/or acronyms.
- Keep the tone of your letter polite and informational.

Resources

Environmental Advocates of New York Website – Search “FixOurPipes” or “Fix Our Pipes”

www.eany.org

Twitter

Follow Environmental Advocates of New York

@greenwatchdogNY

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalAdvocatesofNewYork>

#FixOurPipes Social Media

One of the best ways to raise awareness is to create a voice on social media about the issue. If you see a water main break in your community, take a photo and post it on social media using #FixOurPipes, and include your representative's Twitter handle. And don't forget to tag us (@greenwatchdogNY)!

Although you can utilize any social media network, below is a sample post for Facebook and tweets that can be used on Twitter.

Sample Facebook Posts

#FixOurPipes! Tell New York State lawmakers that we need more funding to fix our pipes and protect clean water in our communities!

Sample Tweets

#FixOurPipes! Support clean water in our communities @NYGovCuomo

Protect clean water in our community! #NY needs more than \$800 million to #FixOurPipes!

Resources

Twitter

@greenwatchdogNY

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalAdvocatesofNewYork>

Instagram

@greenwatchdogNY