

Babylon, Hempstead Land Clean Water Funds



Babylon's Bergen Point water treatment facility.

DECEMBER 16, 2015

A \$1.8 million award for the Town of Babylon and a \$450,000 stipend for the Town of North Hempstead were among the \$75 million in state grants for water-infrastructure improvements announced Tuesday.

The funds come from the New York State Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015, which provides \$200 million in grants to be disbursed through three annual state budgets, starting with the fiscal year 2015-16 budget. The fund is administered by the state's Environmental Facilities Corp. and New York's departments of Health and Environmental Conservation.

The \$75 million will support 45 distinct drinking-water and wastewater infrastructure-improvement projects. While none of the 45 grants completely covers its project's estimated costs, the grants will "make it easier for localities to

make the critical upgrades” their water systems require, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement.

All told, the 45 projects represent a combined investment of about \$440 million.

The projected \$3.1 million Babylon project involves the consolidation of three deficient, privately owned water systems into one publicly owned system and the construction of new transmission and distribution mains, new storage facilities and a new treatment plant.

The North Hempstead project, estimated to cost a total \$1.8 million, will connect an existing pump station to a Port Washington Water Pollution Control District manhole, eliminating a private waterfront septic system and protecting Long Island Sound water quality, according to Cuomo’s office.

The largest grants announced Tuesday, a pair of \$5 million awards, are heading to the City of Binghamton in Broome County and the villages of Watkins Glen and Montour Falls in Schuyler County.

In Binghamton, an ambitious \$179.3 million project will rebuild a sewage treatment plant protecting the quality of the Susquehanna and Chenango rivers. In Schuyler County, a \$22.5 million effort is underway to combine the Watkins Glen and Montour Falls sewage systems under a single treatment plant, thereby improving water quality in Seneca Lake.

The smallest stipend was a \$117,500 grant earmarked for the Village of Arcade in western Wyoming County, where \$469,000 in collection-system upgrades will project Cattaraugus Creek.

While the combined \$2.25 million for the two Long Island projects is a small fraction of the Island’s overall water-infrastructure tab – some estimates price the region’s wastewater needs alone around \$4 billion – State Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (R-Smithtown) said the grants would “improve water quality and save taxpayers more of their hard-earned money.”

“There’s nothing more important than ensuring clean water for the residents of our state,” Flanagan said in a statement. “We must continue to partner with local governments to address their infrastructure needs in a manner that is both cost-effective and taxpayer-friendly.”

To help project managers further reduce the costs of their infrastructure projects, the Environmental Facilities Corp. also provides interest-free and low-interest loans. The grants announced Tuesday are expected to be supplemented by more

than \$362 million in EFC loans, creating “a more fiscally sustainable investment for these communities,” the governor’s office said.

State Assemblyman Steve Englebright (D-East Setauket), chairman of the Assembly’s Environmental Conservation Committee, said he was “delighted” the water-infrastructure grants program “is providing real benefits in the first round of funding” – and noted plenty of opportunity for the state to dive deeper into the Island’s significant water issues in future rounds.

“Almost every town and village on Long Island has projects that could be helped through these water-infrastructure grants,” Englebright said.

<http://bit.ly/22J9AYt>