

Help Wanted



At a time when few industries can say the same, that of water management and treatment—and the storm water sector, in particular—is poised to put more unemployed and underemployed Americans to work.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has (conservatively) estimated that proper management of the nation's storm water currently carries a \$188-billion price tag. In its newly released "Water Works" report, green economy advocate Green for All concludes that this investment made over the next five years could create nearly 2 million jobs and generate more than \$265 billion in economic activity.

Public investment in water infrastructure peaked in the mid-1970s with the passage of the Clean Water Act, but it has declined significantly since. Devastating floods and pollutant-ridden sewer overflows—not to mention the sheer appearance of sewers and drainage systems in many cases—demonstrate that the time has come to repair and replace our neglected, deteriorating storm water infrastructure.

Today's economic climate means tight budgets, but it also is ripe for affordable project financing and implementation. Proactive infrastructure work, more than ever, yields long-term savings.

And, according to Green for All, the power of smart and strategic infrastructure investments goes beyond achieving cleaner, healthier communities: Money invested gives rise to direct, indirect and induced jobs (16% more dollar-for-dollar than a payroll tax holiday, nearly 40% more than an across-the-board tax cut and more than five times as many as temporary business tax cuts, according to Mark Zandi, chief economist for Moody's Analytics). Furthermore, storm water infrastructure career opportunities—ranging from engineering to skilled trades to maintenance work—are accessible and provide the means to support families, the organization says.

The environmental, public health, economic and job creation benefits that storm water infrastructure improvements bring to the table are undeniable, and the time to take action is now. To learn more, visit www.greenforall.org/resources/water-works.

What is your organization or community doing to secure its storm water infrastructure? How has completed or ongoing restoration work impacted your community? We look forward to your feedback in this critical discussion.

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