

## Water services in Indian lands get \$90M stimulus boost

Thursday, July 09, 2009

WASHINGTON — The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of Health and Human Service's (HHS) Indian Health Service (IHS) on July 8 [announced](#) \$90 million in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (economic stimulus program) for improved access to drinking water and wastewater services in the American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The release said the funds will be invested in "shovel ready" infrastructure projects "designed to better protect human and environmental health in Indian Country and to create jobs."

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson is quoted saying the projects will address "long-standing water issues in tribal communities."

A combined EPA-HIS effort identified 95 wastewater and 64 drinking water priority projects in Indian communities to be completed by HIS's Sanitation Facilities Construction Program through EPA recovery act funds. According to the release, the projects exceed the recovery act requirement that 20 percent of the funds be used for green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency improvements and other environmentally innovative projects.

According to 2007 data from the IHS, approximately 10 percent of homes on tribal lands do not have safe drinking water and/or wastewater disposal facilities, compared with 0.6 percent of non-Native homes lacking such infrastructure.

Projects include

- Replacement of failing septic systems with a community wastewater system to benefit the Tule River Tribe in Porterville, CA
- Construction of a surface water treatment facility to serve more than 2,000 homes of the White Mountain Apache Tribe in Whiteriver, AZ.