

Wyoming preps for stimulus

By The Associated Press

CHEYENNE - The Wyoming State Loan and Investment Board enacted emergency rules on Monday to help manage the distribution of federal stimulus funding for water and sewer projects.

Wyoming expects to receive nearly \$39 million for its Clean Water and Drinking Water state revolving fund loan programs. The state revolving funds are meant to help local communities meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

But the funding comes with strings attached.

For one, the state must lend the money to local entities without interest and with some principal forgiveness, making the loans more like grants.

Also, 20 percent of the money must fund environmentally friendly projects. These could be projects that use gray water - or wastewater from baths, showers or laundry - to hydrate golf courses and baseball fields, for example. The Office of State Lands and Investments, which is managing Wyoming's stimulus funds, is still waiting for the Environmental Protection Agency's final definitions for green projects.

Lynne Boomgaarden, director of the Lands and Investments office, said the stimulus money is intended for shovel-ready projects that will create jobs in Wyoming, but it will also help relieve a backlog of projects seeking funding.

"We have always had a list of projects greater than we had money available," she said.

With the board's approval of the emergency rules, state officials can begin receiving grant applications. The federal funds must be spent within a year, and officials say they could begin approving projects in June.

The Grants and Loans Section of Lands and Investments will host a video conference at 10 a.m. Wednesday for local entities to outline the new rules and application form.