

# Mayors Water Council

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## Mayors Convene in Columbus



***The Mayors Water Council*** convened in Columbus, Ohio on June 2nd during The United States Conference of Mayors’ 91st Annual Meeting. Led by Co-chair Mayor Deborah Robertson of Rialto, California, a host of Mayors, business leaders, subject-matter experts, and the EPA’s Municipal Ombudsman gathered to discuss current water issues and upcoming water-related regulations. Highlights included:

**Fred Van Heems**, CEO of Veolia North America announces the company’s new free online [water workforce training program](#).

Mayors **Mary Lou Pauly** (Issaquah, WA), **Kim Norton** (Rochester, MN), and **Danene Sorace** (Lancaster, PA) shared their insights regarding costly implementation for upcoming water-related regulations. **Chad Seidel** from the Water & Health Advisory Council provided an overview of EPA’s upcoming PFAS regulatory actions and outlined concerns for local governments.

**Ruben Rodriguez** from American Water shared new PFAS risk communication resources, including the company’s [new toolkit](#) for local leaders.

Co-chair Mayor **Deborah Robertson** (Rialto, CA) and Rialto Utilities Manager **Thomas Crowley** shared an update on the city’s Lake Rialto Project. EPA’s Municipal Ombudsman **Jamie Piziali** provided Mayors with an outlook regarding the Agency’s upcoming regulatory agenda.



## Welcome Mayor Steven Reed of Montgomery, AL

As a native of Montgomery and product of its public schools, Mayor Reed is committed to realizing his vision of a more equitable, innovative, and compassionate city. To that end, he is advancing an agenda that puts Montgomery on track to become a leader in the New South. As a part of this agenda, Mayor Reed is spearheading a historic undertaking to address local water issues by investing in stormwater and sewer infrastructure. Currently, around 1,200 homes within the city rely on septic tanks instead of traditional sewer systems. While this has not posed a problem in many cases, some households have struggled to keep up with the necessary maintenance and upgrades for their septic tanks to function properly. Consequently, these residents frequently experience issues such as pooling wastewater and sewage backup on their properties. This problem has persisted for decades.



To tackle this issue, the city and county have allocated a significant portion of their funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), nearly 20%, to implement traditional public sewer projects. This investment aims to serve approximately 200 households in the affected neighborhoods within the next three years. Notably, this will be the first major wastewater infrastructure development within the municipal limits of the City of Montgomery. Currently, septic maintenance responsibilities primarily fall on individual homeowners or developers; however, this initiative seeks to address the most pressing public health challenges comprehensively. There are also residents who have not connected to the public sewer due to the high "tap-in" fees, which can reach up to \$4,000. To address this, the city and county are exploring efficient options through a targeted water/sewer assessment to support these communities in connecting to the public sewer system. Additionally, leveraging ARPA funds, a study is underway to evaluate stormwater drainage issues in underserved neighborhoods within the city. These deliberate steps aim to help Mayor Reed prioritize the water investments and enhance the city's ability to compete for federal and philanthropic grants, ultimately advancing its long-term water infrastructure goal.

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### The Economic Impact of America's Hidden Water Crisis

America has a hidden [water crisis](#): over 2 million Americans still don't have running water or a working toilet at home, costing the US economy \$8.58 billion each year. Native American homes are 19x more likely, and Black and Latino households are 2x more likely, than white households to lack water access. Water insecurity exacerbates a cycle of poverty for families - an issue present in all 50 states and the territories. Further, lack of access to water is found everywhere - from rural communities and Native land to urban and suburban settings.

A recent research study from the nonprofit organization DigDeep, [Draining](#), calculates the true cost of America's hidden water crisis. Lack of access to basic water and sanitation services has a direct impact on household earnings, higher healthcare costs, lost tax revenues, and labor market disruptions. Extending these services, however, holds the potential for significant economic returns. DigDeep estimates that every dollar invested in expanding access to running water and flush toilets yields \$4.65 in societal returns — a nearly 5 to 1 return on investment.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the report, state-specific data, partnering in our work, or a briefing on our nation's water access gap, please contact Kabir Thatte ([kabir@digdeep.org](mailto:kabir@digdeep.org)), DigDeep's Director of Policy and Sector-Building.

# \$148.7 Billion Local Spending on Water and Sewer Utilities in 2021

## Staff Report

The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) tracks long-term domestic trends in local water and sewer utility infrastructure finances because municipal utilities serving the public are a category of critical infrastructure. Water and sewer utilities sustain communities by providing basic life services, protecting public health, improving environmental quality and enabling commerce that is essential to the economic base of communities. Annual Census reports provide financial information on expenditures and revenues that, taken together, offer an aggregate national measure of local utility infrastructure investment and budget performance. This report offers findings on several financial aspects of public utility expenditures and revenues over the period 1993 to the recently released Census data for 2021.

## Key Findings:

**Total local government expenditures** in the municipal water sector in 2021 is estimated by the Census to be \$148.7 billion. Water spending was the highest at \$82 billion and 55% of the total 2021 spending. Sewer spending accounted for 45% of the total.

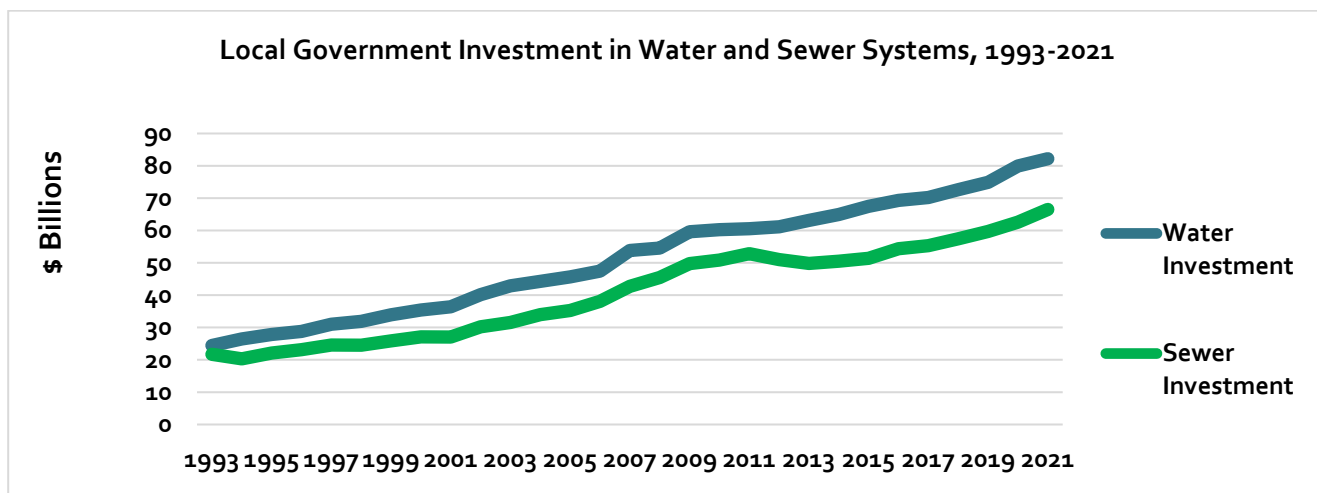
**Table 1: 2023 local water and sewer finances seen in trend**

2021	Expenditures	Revenues
	(\$ Billion)	(\$ Billion)
<b>Total</b>	148.7	146.0
<b>Sewer</b>	66.5	66.2
<b>Water</b>	82.2	79.8

Total local government revenues in 2021 were \$146 billion, with a stubborn continuation of deficits in the water sector while the sewer sector remained efficient in revenue generation.

The 2021 expenditures and revenues set a new nominal value high for the sector and adds to the slow but steady increase in local spending over the long-term, (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

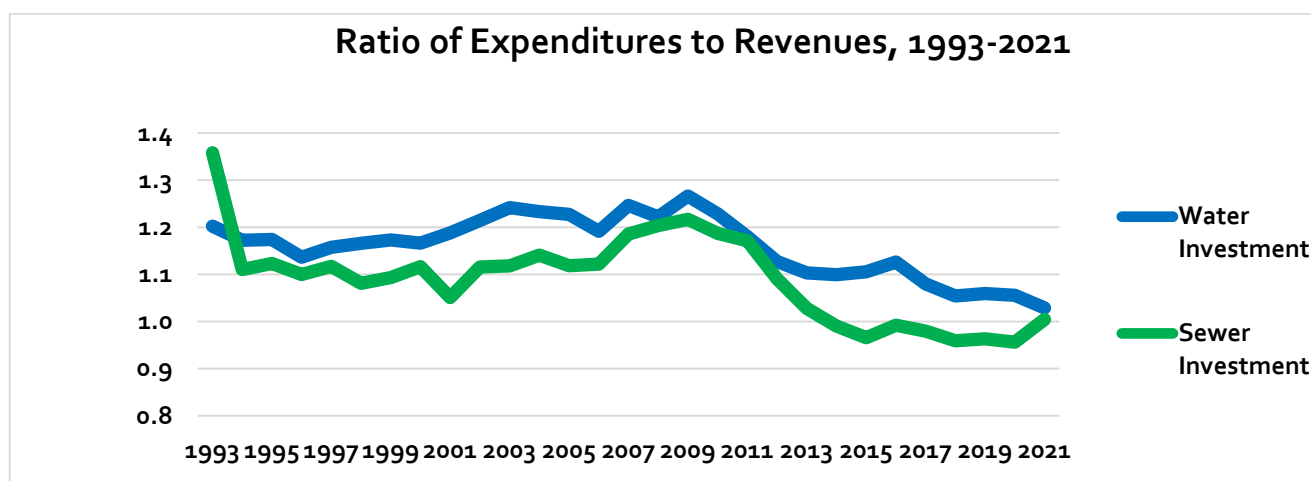


The 29-year long-term average annual growth rate for the sewer sector is 4.2%. The growth rate increased in 2020 by 4.8%, and in 2021 by 6.3%, both years exceeded the long-term average.

The 29-year long-term average annual growth rate for the water sector is 4.5%. The growth rate increased in 2020 by 6.7%, well above the long-term average. In 2021 the growth rate for the water sector was 2.8%, well below the long-term average.

The Ratio of Sewer and Water Expenditures to Revenues indicates a continued trend toward a market where revenues are neutral or positive compared to expenditures, (Figure 2). The sewer sector has been in positive revenue territory in recent years but has remained close to neutral. The water sector continues to close in on a neutral position, the ratio in 2019 was 1.059 and in 2021 has declined to a ratio of 1.029.

Figure 2



The cumulative expenditures for local water and sewer utility infrastructure and services from 1993 to 2021 is \$2.67 trillion, (Table 2). Water expenditures outpace sewer expenditures. Sewer revenues outpace water revenues toward neutral or positive levels.

Table 2: Cumulative Local Sewer and Water Expenditures and Revenues, 1993-2021

	Expenditures (\$ Trillions)	Revenues (\$ Trillions)
Sewer	1.18	1.11
Water	1.49	1.3
Total	2.67	2.4

## Lake Rialto Project: City Update

The City of Rialto announced it received \$2 million in federal funding in support of their [Lake Rialto Habitat Management Project](#), an innovative green infrastructure project aimed at improving water quality and prioritizing environmental stewardship. Using recycled water from the city's adjacent wastewater treatment plant to develop 10 acres of a new lake and adjacent wetlands, the project will also promote habitat restoration efforts and support public recreational activities, such as walking trails and educational outreach.

With \$3 million already secured for the project, the additional \$2 million awarded in federal funding and secured by Congressman Pete Aguilar brings the total amount of funding for the project to \$5 million. The total cost is estimated to be around \$8 million, with an estimated completion date of 2025. City of Rialto Mayor Deborah Robertson has stated that the project design is 90% complete and is hoping to break ground on the project this Fall.

Mayor Robertson has long been a leader for her community in prioritizing environmental stewardship. Currently serving as USCM's Mayors Water Council Co-Chair, the Mayor has a dedicated history of developing policy on a host of environmental concerns, including water quality and sustainability. Additionally, the Mayor's involvement in establishing public-private partnerships in her city has led to great progress in developing critical water infrastructure upgrades for her community. The Lake Rialto Habitat Project continues to exemplify the Mayor's leadership on these issues. Find more information about the project and upcoming updates on the city's [website](#).

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## New PFAS Resources for Local Leaders

### *USCM Staff*

As the EPA advances with proposing new rules and regulations surrounding PFAS – notably PFOA and PFOS, USCM staff has compiled a list of resources that can be found on our new [Mayors Water Council webpage](#). We have included links to the EPA's PFAS strategic roadmap where information related to EPA's approach and specific actions to address PFAS contamination can be found. You can also find our recent comment letters relating to EPA's proposed regulations for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water as well as for CERCLA hazardous designations.

The USCM strongly encourages local leaders to submit comments highlighting local governments' views on this issue. Any insights that can be provided from a local perspective is critical as EPA considers the potential impacts upcoming rulings will have on local government's ability to provide safe and affordable drinking water and wastewater services. A new [toolkit](#) was developed to aid local leaders in understanding complex information about PFOA and PFOS in an easy to read format. Additionally, for mayors who may have specific concerns related to costs, compliance, and implementation, a [template letter](#) has been made available for your use to download.



# Mayors Water Council June 2023 Mayoral Membership



## Co-Chairs

*Deborah Robertson, Mayor of Rialto, CA*

*Daniel Horrigan, Mayor of Akron, OH*

***Steven L. Reed***

*Mayor of Montgomery, AL*

***John. P Marchand***

*Mayor of Livermore, CA*

***Deborah Robertson***

*Mayor of Rialto, CA*

***Joe Ganim***

*Mayor of Bridgeport, CT*

***Joy Cooper***

*Mayor of Hallandale Beach, FL*

***Frank Ortis***

*Mayor of Pembroke Pines, FL*

***Rochelle Robinson***

*Mayor of Douglasville, GA*

***Frank Cownie***

*Mayor of Des Moines, IA*

***Kevin C. Richardson***

*Mayor of Lake Barrington, IL*

***John D. Noak***

*Mayor of Romeoville, IL*

***Mark W. Myers***

*Mayor of Greenwood, IN*

***LaToya Cantrell***

*Mayor of New Orleans, LA*

***Bridget Donnell Newton***

*Mayor of Rockville, MD*

***Leirion Gaylor Baird***

*Mayor of Lincoln, NE*

***J. Christian Bollwage***

*Mayor of Elizabeth, NJ*

***David R. Mayer***

*Mayor of Gloucester, NJ*

***Timothy C. McDonough***

*Mayor of Hope, NJ*

***Thomas M. Roach***

*Mayor of White Plains, NY*

***Daniel Horrigan***

*Mayor of Akron, OH*

***Jack W. Bradley***

*Mayor of Lorain, OH*

***Jamael Tito Brown***

*Mayor of Youngstown, OH*

***Glenn Lewis***

*Mayor of Moore, OK*

***Steve Callaway***

*Mayor of Hillsboro, OR*

***Danene Sorace***

*Mayor of Lancaster, PA*

***Mary Lou Pauly***

*Mayor of Issaquah, WA*

***Ryan Sorenson***

*Mayor of Sheboygan, WI*

***Shawn N. Reilly***

*Mayor of Waukesha, WI*



## 2023 Water Development Advisory Board of The Mayors Water Council



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Veolia Water North America

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Black & Veatch

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