Media Release

Portland Water Bureau

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**WIFIA Loan Awarded to Portland Water Bureau:**

**Infrastructure loan funds most of Bull Run Treatment Projects construction, saving ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars**

The Portland Water Bureau has been selected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to receive a low-cost supplemental loan from the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program to construct the Bull Run Treatment Projects.

The City is building the new facilities to meet federal and state safe drinking water standards. The first will improve corrosion control treatment to reduce lead from home and building plumbing in drinking water. The second, a new filtration facility and related pipelines, will filter water from Portland’s Bull Run supply before it goes to customers to remove a pathogen called *Cryptosporidium.*

“This unique federal financing will provide hundreds of millions in debt-service savings over the loan term,” said Portland Water Bureau Director Gabriel Solmer. “That’s a huge benefit to our customers, allowing us to reduce rate impacts while we make these important investments in the future of our water system.”

Based on rate projections, the WIFIA loan will provide at least $247 million of debt-service savings to ratepayers over its term.

“EPA is excited to partner with Portland to announce one of the very first WIFIA loans closed by the Biden-Harris Administration and the largest WIFIA loan ever issued by the agency,” said EPA’s Acting Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox. “This project and EPA’s financial support WIFIA loan illustrate how strategic partnerships can improve public health and help address climate stress, while creating jobs and saving ratepayers money.”

The City estimates construction of the Bull Run Treatment Projects will create 4,700 to 7,500 direct construction jobs. The construction contracts for the new filtration facility and pipelines will include Community Benefits Agreements that set workforce equity goals for people of color and women in the trades. The contracts also maximize opportunities for Disadvantaged, Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Emerging Small Businesses, and Service-Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise contractors and subcontractors.

“It’s absolutely critical that we provide equitable access to clean drinking water to all Oregonians,” said Gov. Kate Brown. “We must center equity as we make improvements to our water infrastructure systems, ensuring all Oregonians have access to clean drinking water, especially Oregon’s Black, Latino, Latina, and Latinx, Indigenous, tribal, Pacific Islander, Asian, and communities of color.

“In Oregon, we are working to implement a 100-year vision for strategic investments in water projects and policy, as we work toward a sustainable water future that addresses the impacts of climate change. We must be forward thinking in our investments, knowing that our systems must be ready to withstand more severe weather events in the decades to come,” said Gov. Brown.

“No matter where they live, every Oregonian deserves to have clean water to drink, and a modern, up-to-date system to treat their water,” said Sen. Jeff Merkley. “That was my guiding principle when I created the WIFIA program, and it’s the guiding principle behind the Bull Run Treatment Project. I remain as committed today to saving ratepayers’ money and putting reliable access to clean water within reach for all Oregonians as I was eight years ago when this program became law, and look forward to watching the Bull Run Treatment Project come to fruition.”

The program is designed to provide loans with customized terms that can significantly reduce ratepayer costs and create jobs by accelerating investment in the nation’s critical water infrastructure. Borrowers have up to 35 years after substantial completion of a project to repay a loan, saving ratepayers money by allowing more time to pay the loan.

“The City of Portland, and everyone who relies on clean, safe, and reliable drinking water, are grateful to Senator Merkley for his leadership in helping Portland and other communities protect access to clean water, and to Senator Ron Wyden, Representatives Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici, Congressman Kurt Schrader, and the Biden-Harris administration for their support of the City’s efforts to invest in keeping our drinking water clean and safe,” said Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler.

This loan supports lasting, long-term investments in the Bull Run Treatment Projects to further protect health, support the economy, and prepare for the future of this community.

“These projects echo the wisdom of our City’s founders who established Bull Run as our water source more than a century ago,” said City Commissioner Mingus Mapps, the Commissioner in Charge of Water. “We are safeguarding their legacy through long-term investment to protect public health and economic growth for the century ahead.”

### About the Portland Water Bureau

The Portland Water Bureau serves water to almost a million people in the Portland area. Portland’s water system includes two great water sources, 53 tanks and reservoirs, and 2,200 miles of pipes. With 600 employees working on everything from water treatment to customer service, the Water Bureau is committed to serving excellent water every minute of every day.