



**Indian Health Service  
Press Release**

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## **IHS Celebrates World Water Week and Sanitation Facilities Efforts with Five Events across Indian Country**

During World Water Week from August 25–29, the Indian Health Service is hosting events across Indian Country to highlight successful projects funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and to recognize the importance of improving water and sanitation infrastructure in tribal communities. These events will also celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IHS Sanitation Facilities Construction Program (SFC) and its unique and successful history.

“We should be doing everything in our power to ensure all Americans have access to clean drinking water. The health and safety of our children, our families, and our communities depend on it,” said Secretary of Health and Human Services **Xavier Becerra**. “The Biden-Harris Administration has made investments in critical infrastructure and pursued collaborative projects and partnerships with tribes to improve the health and wellbeing of Native people and communities. Working together, we will continue our efforts to bring clean drinking water, reliable sewage systems, and effective solid waste disposal facilities to tribal communities.”

Over the last century, federal investments have been made to modernize water and sanitation systems in Native communities, however adequate sanitation facilities are still lacking in approximately 41,000 American Indian and Alaska Native homes, with more than 5,000 lacking access to a safe water supply and/or waste disposal facility. However, the IHS, through the SFC Program, continues to develop much-needed infrastructure across Indian Country.

“Having access to clean water is something that many take for granted, yet there are far too many communities across Indian Country that to this day do not have access to safe and reliable water and sanitation infrastructure,” said IHS Director **Roselyn Tso**. “I have seen firsthand the impact of not having access to these essential services. It is a matter of public health, but it is also a matter of respect for our Native people. For 65 years, the Indian Health Service has played a leading role in improving water and sanitation services to our people, but with limited resources. This is why the Biden-Harris Administration’s historic investment in this infrastructure is so important in improving overall well-being of our tribal communities.”

The BIL, [which appropriates \\$700 million](#) in each fiscal year from FY 2022 through FY 2026 for the SFC Program, is an unprecedented investment in our nation’s infrastructure and competitiveness, supporting crucial sanitation projects that will result in substantial improvements to clean water and sanitation systems in American Indian and Alaska Native



communities across the country. Currently, over 800 BIL-funded SFC projects are in some state of implementation, ranging from procurement to construction to final report.

The IHS also continues to partner with federal agencies through the [Infrastructure Task Force](#) to work towards a shared goal of improving access to clean water and sanitation in communities across the country. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency works collaboratively with tribal governments, tribal utilities, and tribal members to regulate many utilities, provide technical assistance to support compliance and infrastructure development, and support technical capacities that promote sustainable operations. The goal is to improve access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation on tribal lands.

“EPA’s partnership with IHS and other federal agencies through the Infrastructure Task Force is a primary example of how successful collaboration and leveraging can create impactful improvements in tribal communities,” said EPA Assistant Administrator for International and Tribal Affairs **Jane Nishida**. “Access to clean and safe drinking water is a core component of EPA’s mission to protect human health and the environment, and the infrastructure investments of the Biden-Harris Administration are making unprecedented progress possible in this area.”

IHS World Water Week events include site visits to:

- **Lac Courte Oreilles Water Tower Improvements – New Post, Wisconsin:**
  - This project work will include painting failed coating systems, installing and replacing de-icing equipment, sealing and repairing cracks in the concrete standpipe roof, installing security fencing and gaskets on hatches, and properly sealing all air gaps.
- **San Carlos Wastewater Treatment Facility Expansion – San Carlos, Arizona:**
  - This project involves constructing a 75-acre total retention lagoon with piping, manholes, site fencing, including a sewer force main extension. Once completed, the project will improve the tribe’s ability to operate and maintain the SCWWTF eliminating raw sewage overflows at the lift station, hydraulic overloading of the lagoon, overflows of the existing berms and illegal discharges that violate the EPA Clean Water Act.
- **Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Mission Wastewater System Upgrades – Mission, Oregon:**
  - This project will involve constructing a wastewater reuse facility consisting of collection system improvements, a new wastewater system headworks, packaged activated sludge and tertiary filtration treatment systems, sludge drying beds, an ultraviolet disinfection system, 19,000-feet of recycled wastewater conveyance, approximately 92-million gallon capacity recycled water storage wetlands and ponds, irrigation intake and pump station, electrical



improvements, surface restoration, road crossings, and necessary appurtenances required for a fully operational wastewater reuse treatment and disposal facility.

- **Cherokee New Water Treatment Plant & Raw Water Intake – Stilwell, Oklahoma:**
  - The project involves constructing a new process building, water treatment plant, a new chemical building, and new high-service pump station, and will benefit over 950 homes.
- **Creek/Wagoner Country RWD #5 Water Treatment Plant Expansion – Broken Arrow, Oklahoma:**
  - The project involves constructing a new water treatment plant, including a new treatment process building, two new pulsating clarifiers, four new declining rate filters, new chemical feed building, new SCADA system, and a new high service pump station. Site piping and various electrical and controls work will be included to interconnect the treatment processes.
- **Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska Water Treatment Plant – Winnebago, Nebraska:**
  - The project involves installing a new water treatment plant that can remove radium, iron, and manganese below EPA standards. Once completed, the project will improve the tribe’s ability to operate and maintain their drinking water system.

The site visits are a continuation of visits that took place throughout the year in support of water infrastructure projects in all 12 IHS areas.

The IHS [launched an interactive website](#) in 2023 to furnish insights into projects funded through the BIL. This dynamic platform will consistently offer updated information, encompassing project funding amounts, tribes served, homes impacted, and project statuses.

The nationwide [Sanitation Facilities Construction Program](#) is responsible for the delivery of environmental engineering services and sanitation facilities to American Indians and Alaska Natives, providing homes and communities with essential water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste disposal facilities. The program provides technical and financial assistance to American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages for cooperative development and construction of safe water, wastewater, and solid waste systems and related support facilities.

The IHS, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).