



Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor / Jack Lavin, Director

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Gov. Blagojevich Announces Nearly \$100,000 Opportunity Returns Grant To Fund Emergency Repairs To Hancock County Water System To Protect Public Health



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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES NEARLY \$100,000 OPPORTUNITY RETURNS GRANT TO FUND EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO HANCOCK COUNTY WATER SYSTEM TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH

CHICAGO – Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced nearly **\$100,000** in emergency aid for the town of Warsaw in Hancock County that will fund critical repairs to its water treatment system and prevent the threat of a potential public health hazard that has become increasingly serious. The aggressive effort to improve the quality of infrastructure and public facilities is a major theme of the Governor Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* initiative for the West Central region, his comprehensive, pro-active plan for restoring economic opportunity to the area.

"The most important job that I have as Governor is to provide for and protect the public safety and well-being of Illinois citizens. Quality drinking is a basic necessity that no community should be asked to go without. Moreover, Warsaw has a significant low-income population that simply cannot afford to continue purchasing commercial drinking water, installing expensive water treatment systems and replacing plumbing and fixtures in an effort to combat the numerous problems with the current water supply. When situations like this arise, we will always respond with the needed resources and ensure that public drinking water is clean, safe and accessible," Governor Blagojevich said.

Warsaw's raw water intake problem is twofold. First, there are substantial problems with keeping the intake pipes clear of debris and sand. Second, the water intake pipes have become infested with zebra muscles. Warsaw has a raw water intake extending into the Mississippi River. At the end of April, it discovered that its raw water intake pipe opening sat 18 inches below the mudline in the Mississippi River, and that the 8-inch wide pipe was heavily blocked with the non-native invading zebra mussel. The presence of zebra mussels in, on, and around the water intake pipe causes serious health and safety concerns. Zebra mussels filter large amounts of microorganisms, which ultimately foster blue-algae growth that is harmful to humans as well as animals. The problem is most readily noticed in the foul taste and smell of the water, residents say.

The nearly \$100,000 emergency grant will allow a new 8 inch pipe to be installed alongside the old cast iron pipe. The new intake pipe's end will be angled upward to allow water to enter, and will be fitted with a new stainless steel screen along with a 1 inch conduit attached to it to carry potassium permanganate to control the zebra mussels.

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The funds for this initiative are part of the Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP), a program that assists Illinois communities by providing grants to local governments to help them in financing economic development, public facilities and housing rehabilitation projects. The program is targeted to assist low-to-

moderate income people by creating job opportunities and improving the quality of their living environment. While the grants are typically only approved and awarded annually, emergency CDAP grants can be issued at any time when a community's public health or safety is at risk, as is the case in Warsaw. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the program.

"Governor Blagojevich and I have responded to Warsaw's immediate need with this critical *Opportunity Returns* funding. Whenever the health and safety of our residents is jeopardized, we will continue doing everything we possibly can to address these kinds of situations as quickly possible. As public servants, this is one of our most sacred duties," State Senator John Sullivan (D-Rushville) said.

The total project cost of the water system repairs in Warsaw is estimated to be more than \$130,000. DCEO will provide a CDAP grant to Warsaw for \$97,800.

"Warsaw has demonstrated a serious commitment to improving and repairing infrastructure problems within the community, and, due in large part to that commitment, is now in need of outside funding to finance and complete the project. The fundamental idea of *Opportunity Returns* is to forge partnerships with local governments that help build stronger, more vibrant communities, and I think this project is an excellent example of that idea in action," DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Governor Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials.



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