

OUR TOWNS



HOWARD SCHNAPP

A \$2 million grant to the Manhasset-Lakeville Water District is among \$70 million in funding for water infrastructure projects across the state, Gov. Hochul announced.

ISLANDWIDE

\$18M for safer LI drinking water

NY grants to help fund removal of industrial chemicals from supply

BY TED PHILLIPS

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New York State has given \$18.2 million in grants to two Long Island water providers to bring drinking water up to higher safety standards.

Eleven grants totaling \$16.2 million for the Suffolk County Water Authority and a \$2 million grant to the Manhasset-Lakeville Water District were among \$70 million in grants and financing for water infrastructure projects across the state announced last week by Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Water providers across the state have been investing in projects to meet higher water standards after New York changed regulations in 2020 requiring that drinking water contain lower amounts of harmful chemicals known as “emerging contaminants,” or contaminants of concern to humans and the environment because they may be harmful.

The grants announced last week for Suffolk County Water Authority facilities will be used to construct advanced oxidation systems that remove 1,4 Dioxane, an emerging contaminant from water supplies in the towns of Islip, Huntington, Smithtown and Brookhaven.

The contaminant is a “likely human carcinogen” that has been found in groundwater sites throughout the country, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The chemical has been used in or was a byproduct of certain industrial processes such as the manufacture of paint strippers, antifreeze, some cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, according to the EPA.

The project at Manhasset-Lakeville Water District in Nassau County will install a granular activated carbon system to remove polyfluoroalkyl substances

(PFAS) at one well. According to the EPA, PFAS are synthetic industrial chemicals that can cause adverse health effects and may be carcinogenic.

The state grants were awarded under the Clean Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2017 through the New York State Environmental Facilities Corp. to make treatment improvements to remove emerging contaminants. The grants cover 60% of construction costs with the remaining costs being borne by the local district.

The state grants mean lower costs for Long Island ratepayers to meet the standards, said Dennis Kelleher, a spokesman for the Long Island Water Conference and chief market director at Melville-based H2M architects + engineers.

“We did some estimates that if we did not get the grant funding, the water rates on Long Island would need to increase 50% to cover the cost of construction,” Kelleher said.

He added that about 50 such projects on Long Island are expected to come online this year with the majority of those in Nassau County at sites where past industrial uses created plumes of contamination. Water suppliers have focused on wells that exceeded the maximum contaminant level (MCL) under the new regulations.

“We are now looking at wells that don’t exceed the MCL yet, but they’re getting close,” Kelleher said.

Though the grants fund part of the construction costs, the new water infrastructure will cost more to operate, he said, which may result in increased water supplier rates.

“New York State is committed to providing communities with the resources needed to take action on critical water infrastructure projects that prevent exposure and health risks,” Hochul said in a news release. “The grants and financings . . . will leverage even greater local investments to help ensure our communities in every corner of New York have access to clean, safe water.”

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