

# Wyoming moves water across the Continental Divide. Your capital plan has to move too.

Cheyenne pulls most of its supply from a Colorado River tributary and pipes it over the mountains; the state carries a \$2.3 billion infrastructure gap; and a severance-tax-funded state program does the heavy lifting no small system could finance alone. For a utility CFO or capital lead, each of those forces reshuffles the project list. Invizion helps Wyoming utilities re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click — and defend every decision.

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| <b>~70%<sup>1</sup></b><br><br>Of Cheyenne's water supply is delivered by the Stage I/II transbasin system — collected in the Little Snake (Colorado River) drainage and moved across the Continental Divide. | <b>\$2.3B<sup>2</sup></b><br><br>Wyoming's estimated 20-year drinking water and wastewater investment need — about \$1.6B drinking water and \$699M wastewater. | <b>\$327M<sup>2</sup></b><br><br>Federal State Revolving Fund dollars flowing to Wyoming since 2022 — covering only about 14% of the state's need. | <b>434<sup>3</sup></b><br><br>Water & wastewater facilities across Wyoming, run by roughly 1,700 certified operators — most of them small, rural systems. |
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## THE WYOMING LANDSCAPE

## Four forces are moving your project list at once

None of these is theoretical, and none of them waits for your next budget cycle. Together they mean the capital plan you approved last year may already be the wrong plan.

## SUPPLY — TRANSBASIN &amp; THE COLORADO RIVER

### The state's biggest system depends on water from another basin

Cheyenne gets roughly 70% of its water from the Stage I/II transbasin system: streams in the Little Snake River drainage — part of the Colorado River basin — are collected and moved by tunnel across the Continental Divide into reservoirs that feed the city. The remaining ~30% comes from about 35 wells in four well fields.<sup>1</sup>

That ties Wyoming's largest municipal supply to the most contested river system in the West. The Wyoming State Engineer's Office administers the Colorado River (Green River, Little Snake, and Henry's Fork) to protect the state's compact allocation<sup>4</sup> and the Green River — the Colorado's chief tributary, rising in the Wind River Range and regulated by Fontenelle and Flaming Gorge — puts Wyoming squarely inside post-2026 Colorado River negotiations.<sup>5</sup>

## SUPPLY — SNOWPACK &amp; DROUGHT

### A supply that lives or dies on snow

Cheyenne's transbasin system depends on snow in the Sierra Madre, Medicine Bow, and Laramie ranges, tracked through SNOTEL stations in the Little Snake, Cinnabar Park, and Crow Creek drainages.<sup>1</sup> When the snow doesn't come, the whole delivery chain tightens.

The trend is not reassuring: the EPA has estimated snowpack in the Wind River Range diminished by as much as 80% by 2015<sup>6</sup> and in dry years Wyoming towns have imposed outdoor watering limits while reservoirs like Jackson Lake draw down.<sup>7</sup> For a utility, a variable supply is a capital question: storage, redundancy, and reuse all compete for the same dollars.

#### COMPLIANCE — AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

### A \$2.3 billion need on a thin ratepayer base

Wyoming's drinking water and wastewater systems carry roughly \$2.3 billion in 20-year investment needs — about \$1.6 billion for drinking water and \$699 million for wastewater — and federal dollars over the past four years have addressed only about 14% of that gap.<sup>2</sup>

The pressure is national, too: the EPA's 7th Drinking Water Needs Survey put the country's 20-year need at \$625 billion<sup>8</sup> and the 2022 Clean Watersheds Needs Survey put wastewater and stormwater needs at \$630 billion<sup>9</sup>. In a state with few ratepayers per mile of pipe, renewal cannot be financed by rates alone.

#### STRUCTURE — MANY SMALL SYSTEMS

### Hundreds of small systems, each with a capital plan

Wyoming has 434 water and wastewater facilities operated by about 1,700 certified operators — the vast majority small, rural systems serving a few hundred to a few thousand connections each.<sup>3</sup>

Small systems rarely have the balance sheet, the borrowing capacity, or the staff to carry a large project alone. That is exactly why Wyoming built a distinctive state program — the Water Development Program, funded by severance taxes — to plan and finance projects most communities could never underwrite themselves.<sup>10</sup>

WHO RUNS WYOMING'S WATER

Mostly municipal — backed by a state that builds the big projects

Wyoming's water is delivered overwhelmingly by cities, towns, and special districts. Investor-owned water is a small share here; the real second tier is a large field of districts, joint-powers boards, and small private systems — many of them dependent on state and federal capital.

Municipal & public systems

Rates set by city councils and utility boards

- Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities

State's largest system · Cheyenne (~65,000) + Laramie County<sup>11</sup>
- City of Casper

Second-largest city (~59,000) · North Platte River supply<sup>12</sup>
- Gillette, Laramie, Rock Springs, Sheridan

Large municipal providers statewide
- Green River & Sweetwater County systems

Green River / Colorado basin communities
- Numerous small towns & rural systems

Where funding gaps hit hardest<sup>13</sup>

Districts, boards & private systems

Private/IOU rates regulated by the Public Service Commission

- Improvement & service districts

Special-district water & sewer providers
- Joint-powers water boards

Regional systems built with state funding
- Investor-owned / private water companies

Certificated & rate-regulated by the WY PSC<sup>13</sup>

The Wyoming Public Service Commission has regulated utilities in the public interest since 1915 and maintains a water-certificated service map for private providers.<sup>13</sup>

## Every capital dollar has to be defensible

Whether you answer to a city council, a utility board, or the Public Service Commission, the question is the same: why this project, why now, why at this cost? Wyoming's oversight bodies — and its funding programs — ask it hard.

**City councils & utility boards** set rates and approve capital for municipal systems — the Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities and the City of Casper among them — in public, in front of ratepayers.

**Wyoming Public Service Commission** regulates rates and service for investor-owned and private water utilities, and has served the public interest since 1915.<sup>13</sup>

**State Engineer's Office** administers water rights and interstate compacts — including the Colorado River system (Green River, Little Snake, Henry's Fork) — that govern how much water your sources can legally deliver.<sup>4</sup>

**Wyoming DEQ** holds Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act primacy and administers the State Revolving Funds — lead service line inventories, monitoring, and the compliance capital that follows.<sup>14</sup>

**Water Development Commission** reviews and finances water projects through the state's severance-tax-funded accounts — a second layer of scrutiny on top of local approval.<sup>10</sup>

## The money is moving — can your plan absorb it?

Wyoming utilities have more capital funding available than they've had in a generation — a rare combination of a mineral-funded state program and a wave of federal SRF dollars. The constraint is no longer only dollars; it's readiness: which projects are shovel-ready, which qualify, and how the timing lines up.

**\$327M in federal SRF dollars since 2022** — about \$259M through the Drinking Water SRF (including roughly \$114M for lead service line replacement) and \$67M through the Clean Water SRF.<sup>2</sup>

**Wyoming Water Development Program** — a severance-tax-funded state program with three accounts: new-development projects (I), rehabilitation of systems 15+ years old (II), and dam & reservoir work (III). It plans and finances projects small systems could never underwrite alone.<sup>10</sup>

**\$50B federal water investment (IIJA)** — the largest ever, including roughly \$43B distributed to the SRFs nationally over 2022–2026, which Wyoming draws from each year.<sup>152</sup>

**The gap is the point** — four years of federal investment have covered only about 14% of Wyoming's \$2.3B need, so sequencing the remaining projects against limited state and rate dollars is the whole game.<sup>2</sup>

## WYOMING WATER, IN BRIEF

# Questions Wyoming utility leaders are asking

Short, sourced answers — the same facts we'll dig into on a call, in the context of your system.

## How much of Cheyenne's water crosses the Continental Divide?

About 70%. Cheyenne's Stage I/II transbasin system collects water in the Little Snake River drainage — part of the Colorado River basin — and moves it by tunnel across the Continental Divide into reservoirs that feed the city; the remaining ~30% comes from about 35 wells in four well fields. It's an engineering marvel, and it ties the state's largest supply to snowpack and to Colorado River politics.

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## What are Wyoming's water infrastructure needs, and how much funding is available?

Wyoming faces roughly \$2.3 billion in 20-year drinking water and wastewater needs (about \$1.6B drinking water, \$699M wastewater). Since 2022 the state has received about \$327 million in federal State Revolving Fund dollars — roughly \$259M drinking water (including ~\$114M for lead lines) and \$67M clean water — which covers only about 14% of the need.

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## Who sets water rates in Wyoming?

Municipal utilities — the Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities, the City of Casper, and other towns — set their own rates through city councils and utility boards. The Wyoming Public Service Commission regulates rates for investor-owned and private water companies. Either way, capital spending has to be justified to a governing body and to ratepayers.

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## What is the Wyoming Water Development Program?

It's the state's distinctive, mineral-funded engine for water projects. Established in 1975 and funded by severance-tax distributions, the program plans, finances, and builds projects through three accounts: new development (I), rehabilitation of systems 15+ years old (II), and dam and reservoir work (III). For many small Wyoming systems it is the only way a major project ever gets built.

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## How exposed is Wyoming to Colorado River cuts?

More than most people realize. Wyoming is an Upper Colorado River Basin state: the Green River — the Colorado's chief tributary — rises in the Wind River Range, and the State Engineer administers the Green, Little Snake, and Henry's Fork to protect the state's compact allocation. Because Cheyenne diverts from the Little Snake, post-2026 Colorado River negotiations are a supply question for Wyoming, not just a downstream one.

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## How does Invizion help Wyoming water utilities plan capital?

Invizion is scenario-based capital portfolio optimization for water utilities. It lets you model how a dry snowpack year, a delayed SRF or Water Development loan, or a compliance deadline reshuffles your whole project list; re-sequence the portfolio automatically against your funding and rate constraints; and keep a defensible record of every decision for your board, the PSC, or the Water Development Commission. The best next step is a short first meeting to look at it against your own program.

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## REFERENCES

## Sources

Every figure in this briefing is tied to a primary or authoritative source.

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15. U.S. EPA, "Water Infrastructure Investments" — the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act delivers more than \$50B for water infrastructure, the largest such federal investment, 2022–2026. [epa.gov](https://epa.gov)

## ABOUT INVIZION

## Capital program optimization for utilities

Invizion is a purpose-built capital lifecycle management platform for water and wastewater utilities. It integrates budgeting, CIP, scenario analysis, and funding-source tracking in one system — so utilities can re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click and demonstrate audit-ready, defensible decisions to regulators, boards, and rating agencies.

**See what a defensible Wyoming capital plan looks like — book a 20-minute first meeting.**

**Book your first meeting →**