



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GLWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES CHANGES TO WATER AFFORDABILITY AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM ADDRESSING CONTINUED COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- *New exception allows those financially impacted by COVID-19 to continue receiving assistance*
- *Eligibility expanded to reach those at or below 200 percent of federal poverty level*
- *Renters will also have access to WRAP's conservation and plumbing repair programs for the first time*

DETROIT— The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) Board of Directors recently approved an exception to its Water Residential Assistance Program (WRAP) that will assist participants financially impacted by COVID-19. The exception allows those enrolled in WRAP who are unable to make monthly payments on time due to issues related to COVID-19 to remain in the program and maintain eligibility to continue receiving monthly bill credits and arrearage payments through December 31, 2020.

The Board also recently approved changing the eligibility for households from 150 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and increased conservation and plumbing repair spending per eligible household from \$1,000 to an average of \$1,500 (with a cap of \$2,000) per customer. In addition, for the first time since the program's inception, eligible rental households are now able to take advantage of conservation and plumbing repairs offered through WRAP to help reduce their water consumption, if the landlord agrees not to increase rent for 12 months. These program changes became effective in GLWA's Fiscal Year 2021, which began July 1, 2020.

“This expansion of WRAP will help us reach many more households in Detroit and the participating member communities who may be struggling to pay their water bills during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond,” said Gary Brown, GLWA board member appointed by the city of Detroit, who sponsored the resolution related to the broader program changes and is the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department director. “For example, now that households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible, a family of four with up to \$52,400 in combined income qualifies to participate. Prior to expansion, the maximum household income for a family of four was \$36,450. This vote also expands what I believe is the most significant WRAP benefit — more dollars for minor home plumbing repairs to help homeowners, and now renters, get to an average monthly bill.”

GLWA's budgeted WRAP funding for FY 2021 is \$6.1 million. From March 2016 to June 30, 2020, \$16.9 million in total GLWA funding has been committed to enrolled communities throughout southeast Michigan through WRAP.

"GLWA remains committed to WRAP, especially with the increased financial burdens from the economic impact of the global pandemic, and to ensuring that it is structured in a way that best assists our member communities and those they serve," said Dr. Beverly Walker-Griffea, Board Chair and board representative appointed by the state of Michigan. "We are proud to offer our member partner communities this program, as it not only provides financial support, but it also puts enrolled households on a path toward self-sufficiency through the conservation education and assistance provided."

Since its inception in March 2016, 77 of GLWA's member communities have opted-in to WRAP, a first-of-its-kind program in Michigan and one of few sustainable assistance plans in the country. More than 21,000 households across GLWA's service area are enrolled in the program, with more than 14,000 participants coming from Detroit. Through June 30, 2020, almost 3,300 homes with high water usage have received a home water audit, and 61 percent of homes have received professional plumbing repairs after their audit.

WRAP, which is administered by Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency (Wayne Metro), provides qualifying customers with help in paying current and past-due water bills. Eligible customers receive a \$25 monthly credit toward current water bills with any arrears suspended for 12-24 months. Participants are also eligible to receive a bill credit of up to \$700 toward any arrearages. In 2018, the GLWA Board updated WRAP to assist income-qualifying households with lead removal. The program now includes the replacement of kitchen and bathroom faucets predating the 1986 lead-free plumbing code change.

Finally, GLWA is pleased to announce that the Village of Lake Orion is now enrolled as a WRAP participant community, and three additional communities have opted into the program and are actively negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). WRAP has the potential to serve over 100 communities within the GLWA service area, but to assist qualified households, each community must opt-in to the program and sign an MOA with Wayne Metro.

Eligible residents may apply for WRAP by calling 313-386-9727 or learn more at waynemetro.org/wrap.

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About the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA)

The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) is the provider-of-choice for drinking water services to nearly 40 percent, and efficient and effective wastewater services to nearly 30 percent, of Michigan's population. With the Great Lakes as source water, GLWA is uniquely positioned to provide those it serves with water of unquestionable quality. GLWA also has the capacity to extend its services beyond its 88 member partner communities. As part of

its commitment to water affordability, the Authority offers a Water Residential Assistance Program to assist low-income households in participating member communities throughout the system. GLWA's board includes one representative each from Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties, two representatives from the city of Detroit, and one appointed by the Michigan governor to represent member partner communities outside of the tri-county area.