

Marie Wellock

The Town of Wilkeson received the Fiscal Year 2026 Draft Water Quality Funding Offer List and Intended Use Plan. The Town of Wilkeson is assessed at "moderate hardship." Because of this assessment, the town would need to take a loan of \$2,303,675.00 and would receive grant funding in the amount of \$1,506,325.00

The Town of Wilkeson has been working with the Small Communities Initiative (SCI) to address multiple issues with the Town's Wastewater Facilities, and to assist Town officials with finding available funding opportunities and/ or developing funding strategies. Through this partnership, we have been able to discuss our needs and plans with Stephanie Allen at Ecology. One of the main issues we have is that this loan would create significant hardship on all of our sewer customers, increasing the monthly sewer costs by \$43.34 per customer to \$156.15, using FY2025 fee schedule. When you also include water, because all sewer customers are also municipal water customers, the overall base utility bill would be \$201.20 per month, again using FY2025 fees.

In our discussions, we determined that there were fewer "commercial" sewer connections than initially reported because they do not put out at least 3,500 gallons per day. There is only one connection that does use at least 3,500 GPD. I spoke to Stephanie and she provided the town with a new form to complete regarding the connections. When this form was submitted and the numbers were inputted, it increased the grant award amount by \$89,000.00. We are asking that the grant award be increased due to this finding.

The Town of Wilkeson is hopeful that additional grant funds will be made available to us in the final offer. According to GoodRoots Northwest, there are currently 167 households in Wilkeson are receiving food assistance through their program. To be eligible for their services, you must the guidelines within The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). We fear that our senior and low-income families will be priced out of Wilkeson or pushed deeper into food insecure situations and increase poverty due to this \$520.00/ per year annual increase.