



# EPA's Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap Initiative

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# Disclaimer

The materials being presented represent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and do NOT reflect the opinions of NOWRA.

# Wastewater Challenges in Rural America

- Small, rural communities often struggle to provide adequate sanitation services to residents.
- An estimated 2.2 million people in the U.S. lack basic running water and indoor plumbing in their homes.
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) presents a historic opportunity to invest in communities and address wastewater infrastructure needs.
- The IIJA provides \$11.7 billion through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF).



# Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap (CAWAG) Initiative

- Provides no-cost technical assistance (TA) to communities with failing septic systems or without wastewater infrastructure.
- In 2022, EPA piloted the program in 11 places across the southern regions of the country.
- Last year, EPA announced the expansion of CAWAG to 150 additional communities.
- Recipients of technical assistance will access solutions-oriented guidance that focuses on community's wastewater needs.



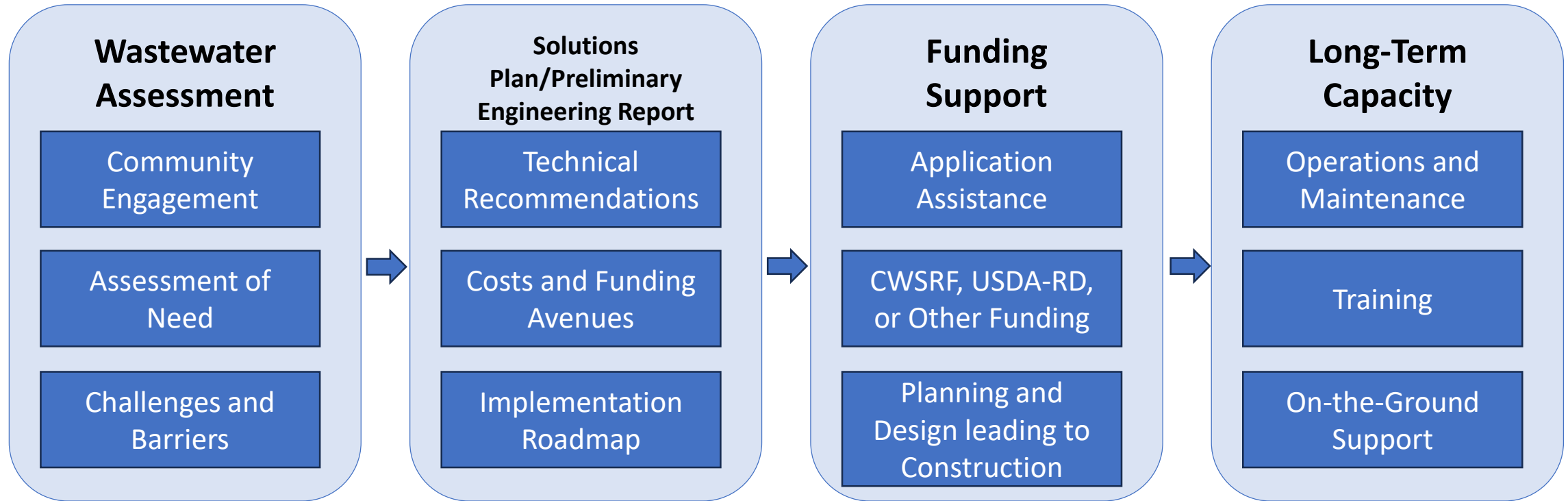
# Pilot Profile: Bolivar County, MS



Image: Septic tank without lid, raw sewage on ground

- Small, unincorporated community (Dunlap) of 34 homes adjacent to the city of Mound Bayou.
- Homes have failing onsite systems with ponding of raw or partially treated sewage on/near private properties.
- Examined both decentralized and centralized sewer options.
- Mound Bayou has agreed to extend sewer service to Dunlap residents (already provide water to Dunlap).
- Capital cost of approx. \$2.6 million to extend the sewer main and connect the 34 homes in Dunlap.
- Received MS CWSRF funding offer of \$2.6 million with \$2.1 million in subsidy in September 2024.

# CAWAG Process



# Wanted: More CAWAG Communities!

- Do septic systems back-up into homes or cause sewage to pool in yards?
- Does the town struggle to provide adequate sanitation services to their residents?
- Does the community struggle to rebuild wastewater and septic systems damaged by natural disasters?

If any of these conditions apply, CAWAG may be able to help.

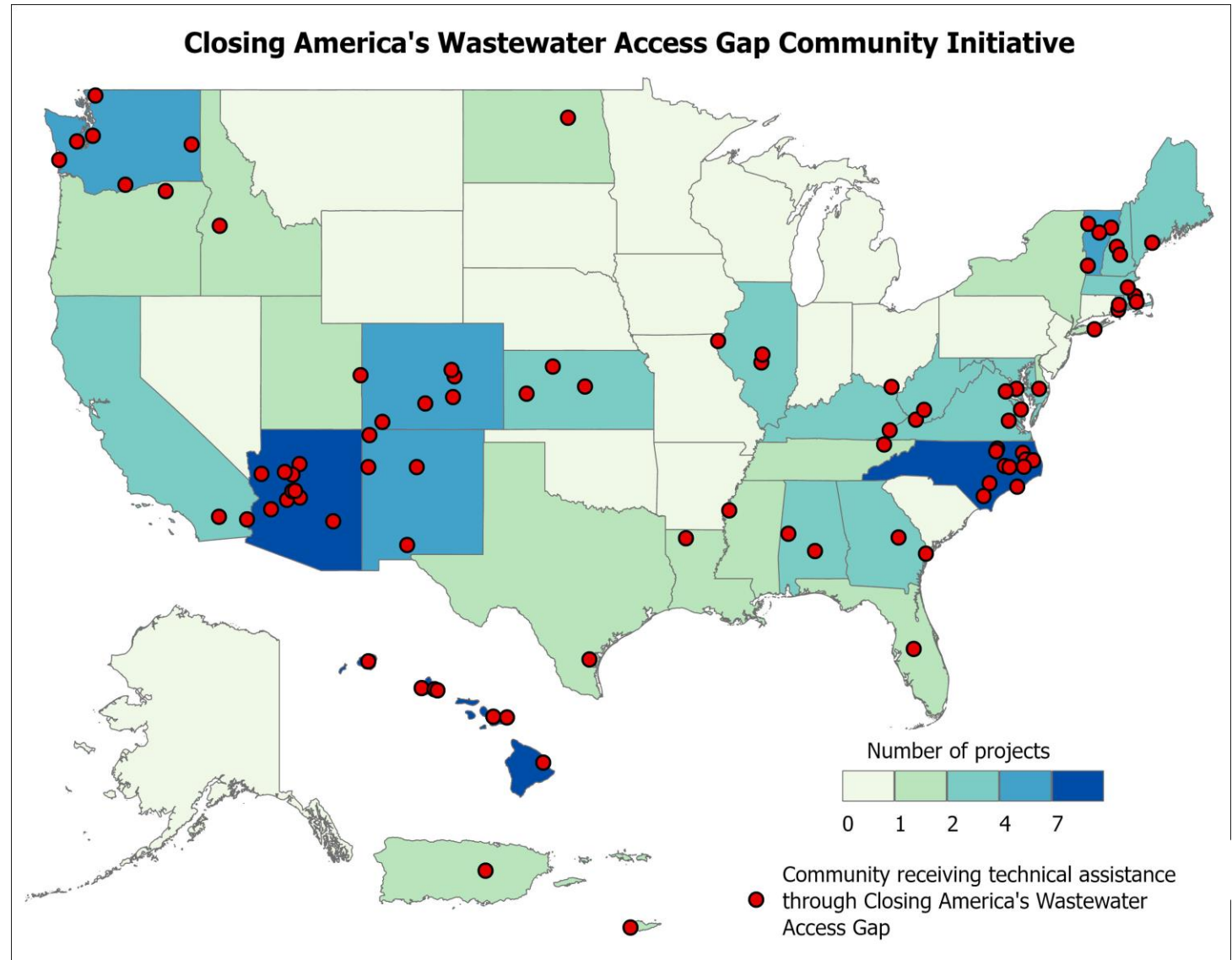


# Collaborating to Identify Communities

- Working closely with the EPA Regions, Tribes, states (and their municipalities), and territories to identify communities that would be a good fit for this technical assistance.
- Conducting local outreach to community organizations, nonprofits, etc.
- Speaking at conferences like this one! Looking to speak with:
  - County or State Sanitarians or Environmental Health Specialists
  - County or State Onsite Wastewater Professionals
- If you know of a community in your county or state that could be a good fit for CAWAG, please share!

# CAWAG Successes

- Total number of projects receiving TA: 78
- Pilot funding: \$28M (so far)
- Funding received in expansion (so far): \$1M
- Over \$100M in submitted funding applications



# Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap: Community Project Spotlights

# Community Spotlight: Malden, WA



- 80% of homes and structures destroyed in September 2020 wildfire.
- All lots are served by individual onsite systems permitted by Whitman County.
- As town and residents rebuild, Whitman County is requiring the town to install a centralized sewer collection and treatment system.
- Many existing onsite systems do not meet current code and were installed before onsite regulations were implemented.
- Lot sizes are also small and cannot meet current setback requirements.

# Community Spotlight: Malden, WA

- Town received \$5.4 million EPA Community Grant but an estimated \$6 million needed to construct new centralized system.
- Able to subcontract with the town's consultant, to perform preliminary engineering work.
- CAWAG team submitted Department of Ecology application for \$6 million.
- Environmental Finance Center will assist with rate study and fiscal sustainability plan.
- CAWAG team is helping the town on a new sewer ordinance.



# Community Spotlight: Malden, WA



# Community Spotlight: Shiprock, NM



- Shiprock is an unincorporated agricultural community within the Navajo Nation.
- Agricultural irrigation in the area creates a shallow groundwater table which impacts the performance of onsite systems.
- IHS requested technical assistance to evaluate 210 homes and identify solutions for wastewater treatment.
- EPA prepared a Preliminary Engineering Report to move the project to Tier 1 "Ready to Fund" status in the IHS Sanitary Deficiency System.

# How Communities Can Request Support

- Technical assistance can be requested through the WaterTA request form.
- Communities – including homeowners and utilities – and all states, Tribes, and territories can submit the request.
- Communities are selected on a rolling basis; there is no deadline to apply.

The screenshot shows the EPA website's navigation bar with the EPA logo and the text "United States Environmental Protection Agency". A search bar is visible on the right. Below the navigation bar, the "Water Infrastructure" section is highlighted, with a "CONTACT US" link. The main heading is "Water Technical Assistance Request Form". Below this, the OMB Control Number (2030-0051) and the EPA WaterTA logo are displayed. The expiration date is listed as 5/31/24. The text instructs users to complete a form to request WaterTA services, explaining that EPA WaterTA aims to assist communities with federal funding, quality water infrastructure, and reliable water services. It notes that WaterTA cannot provide direct assistance to federal facilities and encourages users to learn more about who can receive services and the challenges WaterTA can help address. Contact information for WaterTA@epa.gov is provided. A note states that not every request may be offered WaterTA, and participation in other EPA technical assistance programs does not guarantee funding through the State Revolving Funds (SRFs) or other programs. Finally, it encourages users to sign up for updates on EPA programs and resources, and provides contact information for the WaterTA Request Form.

[www.epa.gov/water-infrastructure/forms/water-technical-assistance-request-form](https://www.epa.gov/water-infrastructure/forms/water-technical-assistance-request-form)

# Questions?

Contact info:

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*To send community suggestions for Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap, please submit a request through the WaterTA webform or email us!*