

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

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Wastewater Challenges in Rural America

- Small, rural communities often struggle to provide adequate sanitation services to residents
- RealWaterTA is a back-to-basics approach to support best-practice approaches that will address local needs while partnering with states and Tribes
- IIJA provided $11.7 billion through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) to help communities address wastewater infrastructure needs

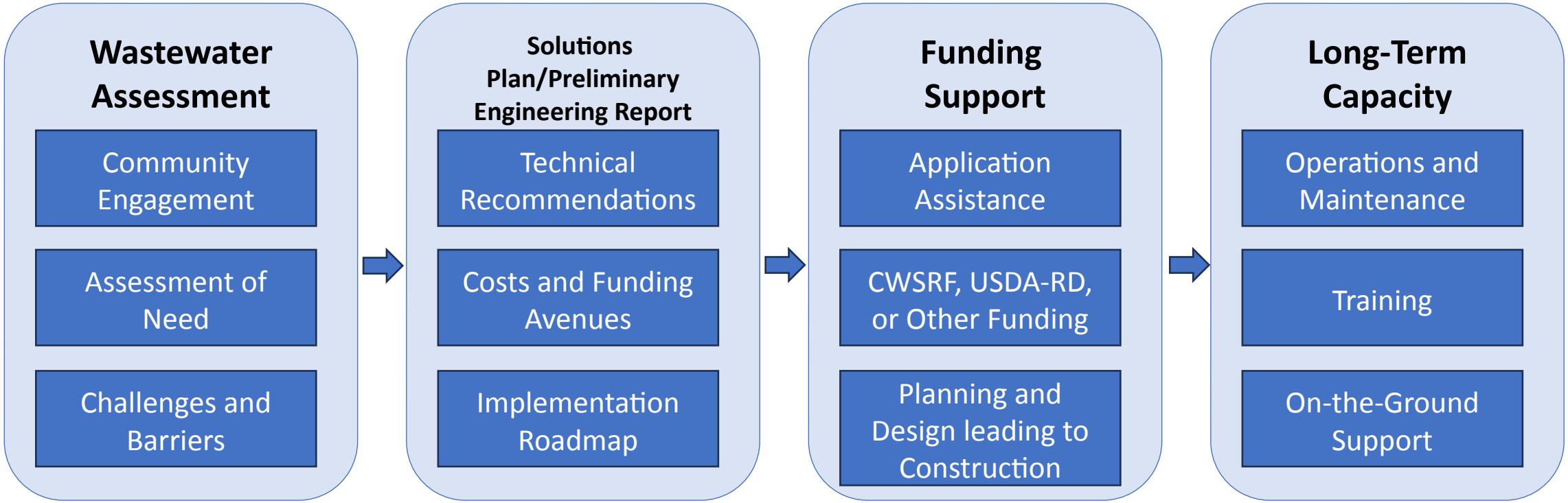


Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap (CAWAG) Initiative

- Provides no-cost technical assistance (TA) to communities with failing septic systems or without wastewater infrastructure
- In 2022, EPA piloted the initiative in 11 places across the southern regions of the U.S
- In 2024, EPA announced the expansion of CAWAG to 150 additional communities
- Recipients of TA will access solutions-oriented guidance that focuses on community's wastewater needs



CAWAG Process



Wanted:
More CAWAG Communities!

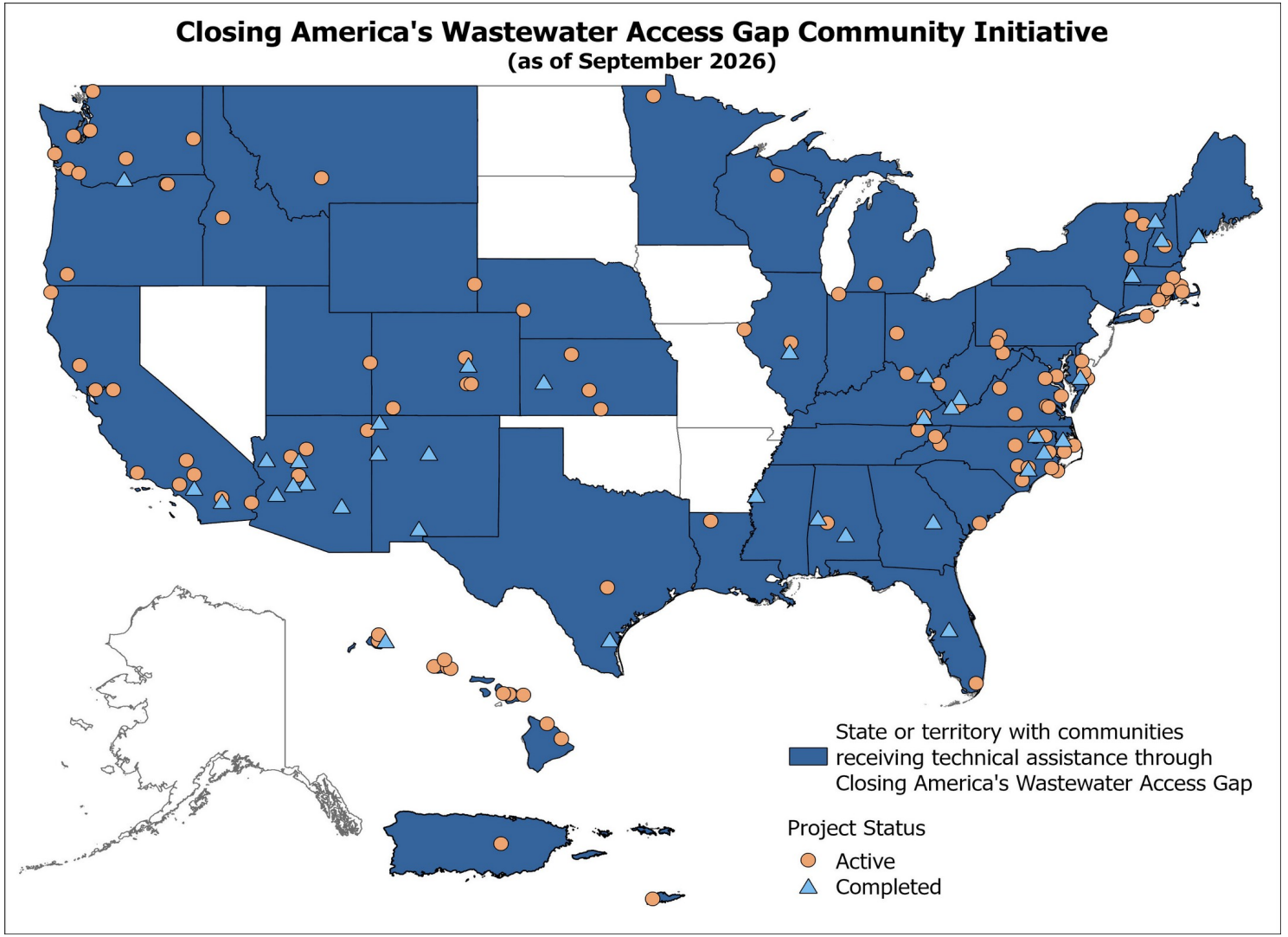
- Do septic systems back-up into homes or cause sewage to pool in yards?
- Does the town struggle to provide adequate sanitation services to their residents?
- Does the community struggle to rebuild wastewater and septic systems damaged by natural disasters?

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



CAWAG Metrics

- Total number of communities receiving TA: 187
- Projects in 40 states and 2 territories
- Funding Received: $43M (as of 9/2026)
- $250M in submitted funding applications
- Over 50 projects completed

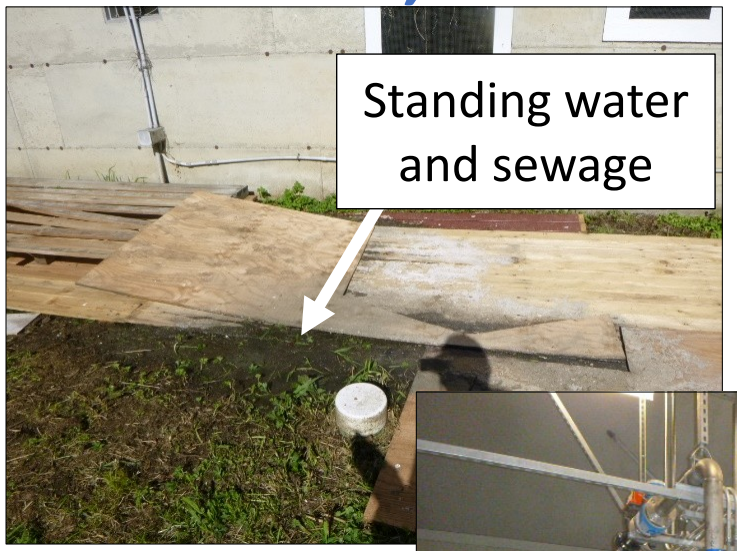




Community Project Spotlights

Community Spotlight: Skokomish Tribe, Washington

- Skokomish Reservation is southwest of Seattle, WA
- Majority of homes served by onsite systems that are failing due to high water table, poor soils, tidal influence, and age
- Inadequate wastewater treatment has impaired local water bodies and impacted fisheries and shellfish beds vital to the Tribe
- Septic systems are maintained by the Tribe
- Many multigeneration homes may contribute to excessive flows



Failing onsite system



MBR Plant

Community Spotlight: Skokomish Indian Tribe, Washington



- In July 2025, EPA completed and submitted a PER to IHS and WA CWSRF
- The Tribe received the full funding amount of **$1,228,200** from WA CWSRF.
  - Mostly as forgivable loan, to construct a new lift station and connect homes with failing septic systems
- The Tribe also received **$233,890** from IHS to replace septic systems for five homes.

Community Spotlight: Hillcrest MHC, Vermont

- Resident-Owned Community 44-unit manufactured housing community in Colchester, Vermont
- Requested technical assistance to explore options to replace aging wastewater system
- May 2025 site visit found:
  - Collection lines past their useful life (Orangeburg)
  - Cracked piping and tree root intrusions
  - Missing siphons limiting drainfield functionality
  - Trees encroaching drainfield edges





Community Spotlight: Hillcrest MHC, Vermont

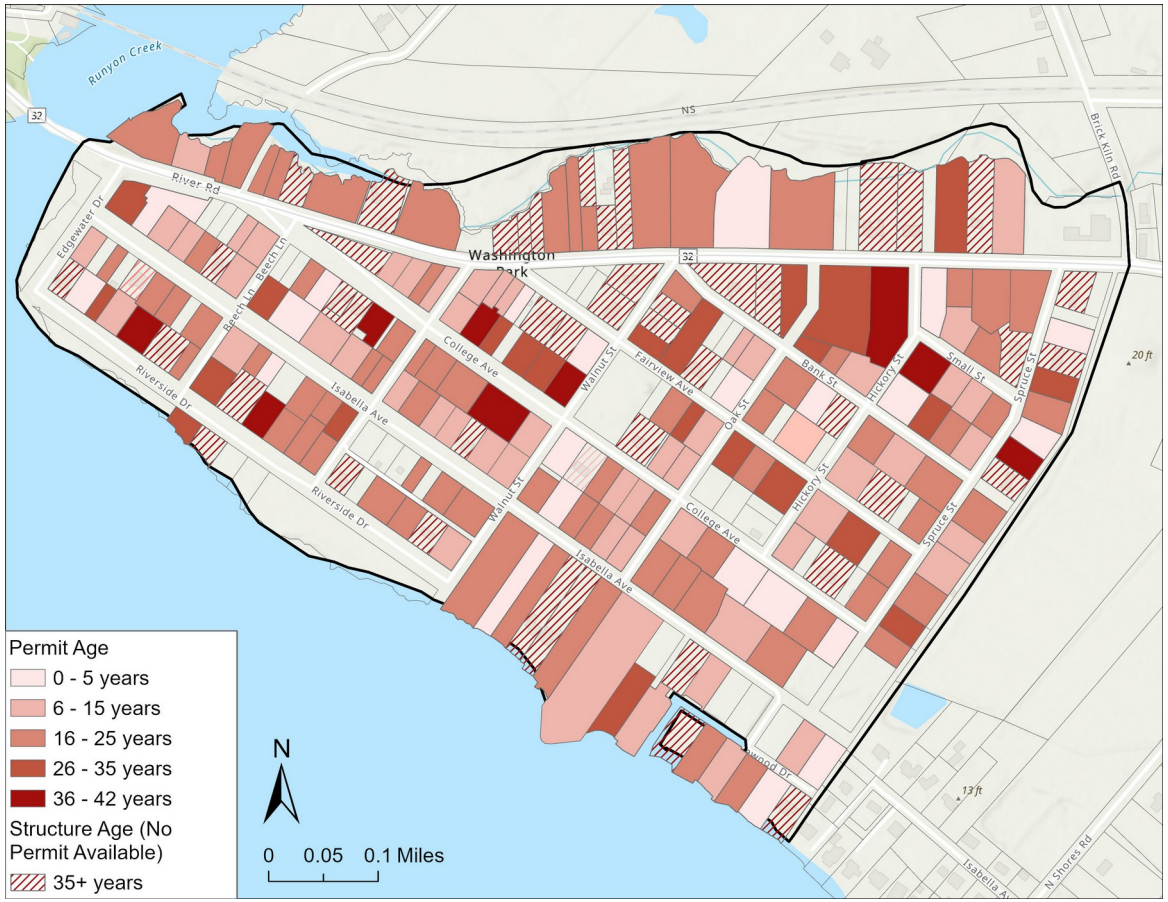
- Worked with VTDEC to institute repairs under the existing permit, rather than a new permit
- Completed PER in May 2026
- Held community meetings with the board and residents to answer questions and present solutions
- Project team is supporting a portion of the design work and evaluating construction funding options





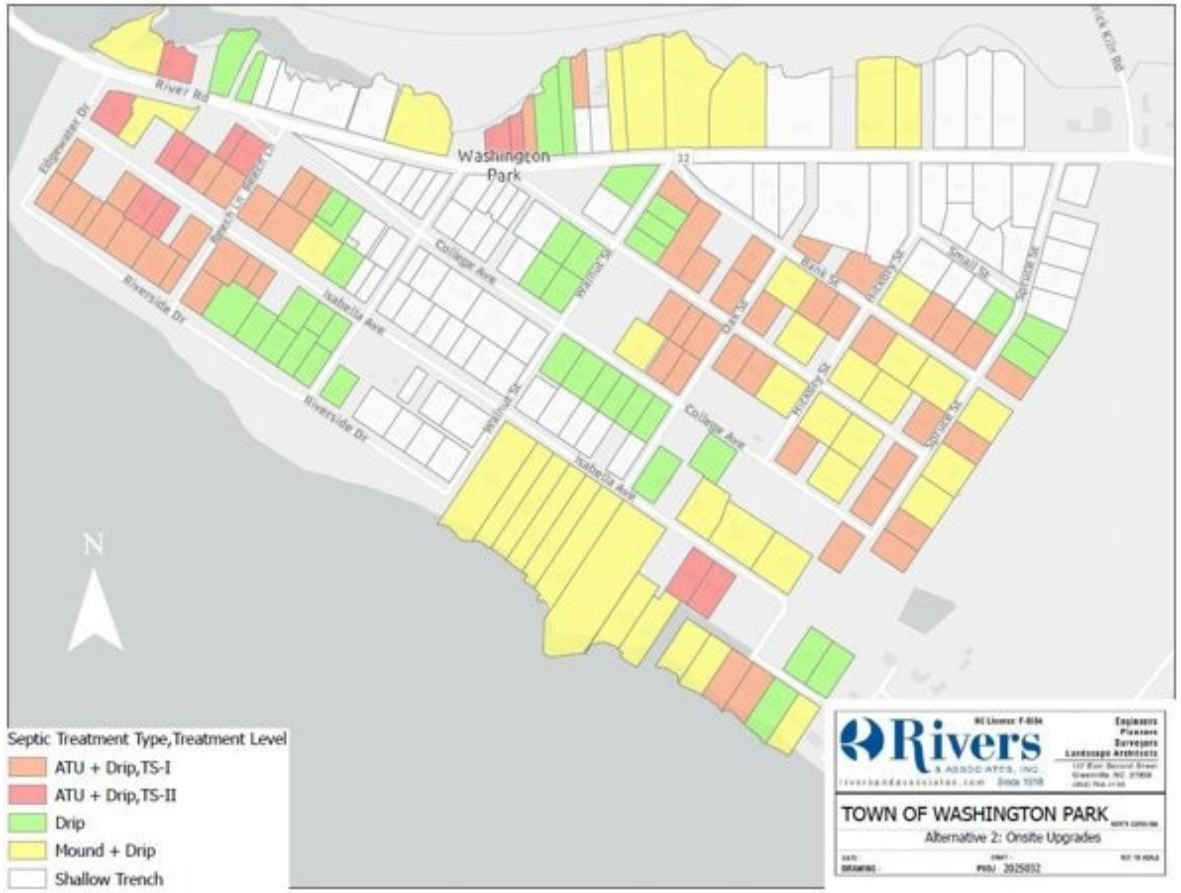


Community Spotlight: Washington Park, North Carolina



- Washington Park is in eastern NC on the north shore of the Pamlico River
- Town requested assistance to address septic systems and concerns over rising groundwater
- 217 home sites with ~70% of the parcels with septic systems less than 0.5 acres
- The area has small lot sizes and clay soils
- Nearby city of Washington has a wastewater treatment plant with capacity, but is not interested in owning a new collection system

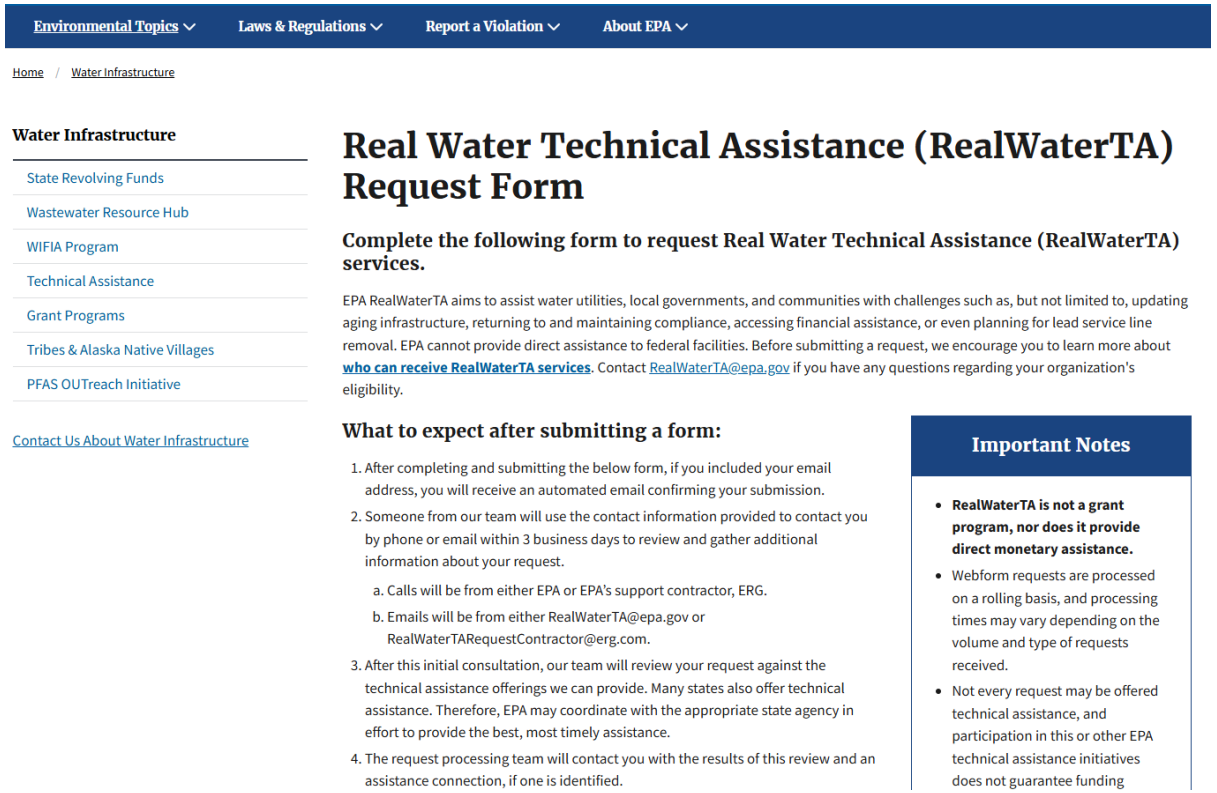
Community Spotlight: Washington Park, North Carolina



- PER was developed by local engineering firm to identify options to address failing systems
  - Sewer was $$
- CAWAG team helped the town apply to CWSRF program
  - Received $500,000, including $250,000 in principal forgiveness, from the state's Decentralized Pilot program
- Funds will be used to repair/upgrade systems and establish a maintenance program.

How Communities Can Request Support

- Technical assistance can be requested through the RealWaterTA 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



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Home / Water Infrastructure

Water Infrastructure

- State Revolving Funds
- Wastewater Resource Hub
- WIFIA Program
- Technical Assistance
- Grant Programs
- Tribes & Alaska Native Villages
- PFAS OUTreach Initiative

Contact Us About Water Infrastructure

Real Water Technical Assistance (RealWaterTA) Request Form

Complete the following form to request Real Water Technical Assistance (RealWaterTA) services.

EPA RealWaterTA aims to assist water utilities, local governments, and communities with challenges such as, but not limited to, updating aging infrastructure, returning to and maintaining compliance, accessing financial assistance, or even planning for lead service line removal. EPA cannot provide direct assistance to federal facilities. Before submitting a request, we encourage you to learn more about **who can receive RealWaterTA services**. Contact RealWaterTA@epa.gov if you have any questions regarding your organization's eligibility.

What to expect after submitting a form:

1. After completing and submitting the below form, if you included your email address, you will receive an automated email confirming your submission.
2. Someone from our team will use the contact information provided to contact you by phone or email within 3 business days to review and gather additional information about your request.
   a. Calls will be from either EPA or EPA's support contractor, ERG.
   b. Emails will be from either RealWaterTA@epa.gov or RealWaterTARequestContractor@erg.com.
3. After this initial consultation, our team will review your request against the technical assistance offerings we can provide. Many states also offer technical assistance. Therefore, EPA may coordinate with the appropriate state agency in effort to provide the best, most timely assistance.
4. The request processing team will contact you with the results of this review and an assistance connection, if one is identified.

Important Notes

- **RealWaterTA is not a grant program, nor does it provide direct monetary assistance.**
- Webform requests are processed on a rolling basis, and processing times may vary depending on the volume and type of requests received.
- Not every request may be offered technical assistance, and participation in this or other EPA technical assistance initiatives does not guarantee funding

https://www.epa.gov/water-infrastructure/forms/real-water-technical-assistance-realwaterta-request-form

Questions?

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