

NOWRA Awarded \$2.3 Million from USDA Rural Development to Tackle Failing Septic Systems in Rural Communities

First-time USDA Rural Development award will put technical assistance professionals directly into small, underserved communities

WESTFORD, Mass. — September 28, 2026 — The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) has received a \$2.3 million Water and Waste Disposal Technical Assistance and Training Grant from USDA Rural Development. It's NOWRA's first award from USDA Rural Development.

The grant will help small, economically disadvantaged rural communities find, diagnose and fix water and waste disposal problems where centralized sewer isn't available or isn't financially feasible. These are often places where failing septic and other decentralized systems threaten public health and water quality.

"This funding allows NOWRA to put trained technical assistance professionals directly into small, economically disadvantaged rural communities to resolve failing septic and decentralized wastewater systems," said NOWRA Executive Director Thomas Groves. "We're grateful for USDA Rural Development's partnership in protecting public health and helping these communities reach lasting, sustainable water infrastructure solutions."

NOWRA's award is part of \$40 million in technical assistance and training grants that USDA Rural Development announced September 28. In that announcement, Rural Utilities Service Administrator Karl Elmshaeuser said the awards "will ensure American families have access to efficient, reliable water and waste disposal services." National Rural Water Association and Rural Community Assistance Partnership were also among the recipients.

NOWRA will deliver the program with its State Affiliate partners from October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027. Participating communities will get no-cost help that includes:

- assessing existing onsite and decentralized systems
- identifying practical, affordable solutions
- preparing applications for infrastructure funding
- training for local officials and system operators

Read USDA's full announcement at [USDA Rural Development Announces \\$40 Million to Support Technical Assistance, Training to Protect, Improve Rural Water and Waste Disposal Systems | Rural Development](#). To learn more about the program, visit [USDA Rural Development](#).

About NOWRA

Founded in 1992, the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) is the largest organization in the U.S. dedicated to educating and representing the onsite and decentralized wastewater industry. Its mission is "advancing sustainable decentralized wastewater infrastructure through advocacy and professional development, to protect public and environmental health." NOWRA's nearly 6,000 members include regulators, engineers, contractors, soil scientists, manufacturers, educators and service providers. Through a network of State Affiliates representing 28 states, NOWRA works to protect North America's water resources and the communities that depend on them. Learn more at www.nowra.org.

Media Contact

*Thomas Groves, Executive Director
tgroves@nowra.org | 508-254-6078*

This material is based upon work supported under a grant by the Rural Utilities Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Rural Utilities Service.

National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.