

Water Sense

Winter 1997/98
Volume 4, Issue 1

Water 2000 Makes Progress in Rural America

In 1994, the Clinton Administration announced the Water 2000 initiative to bring safe drinking water "to the many rural American homes that lack it as soon as possible."

Since then, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—the lead federal agency on the initia-

tive—and other federal, state, and local agencies have joined forces with private individuals and groups to develop drinking water projects in some of the nation's most remote, low-income areas.



A woman in Virginia makes one of many trips to an open well for her family's drinking water. The Water 2000 initiative hopes to end scenes like this by bringing safe drinking water into the homes of all rural Americans.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Agriculture

Water 2000 is not a new funding source. "It's more of a targeting program," explains Bart Handford, assistant to the administrator for USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Most of the funding comes from RUS's existing Water and Waste Disposal (WWD) program, which serves as the "lender of last resort" for communities that can't qualify for conventional funding.

The initiative's primary focus is on helping people without any drinking water piped into their homes. A nationwide "Water 2000 Needs Assessment," conducted by the USDA in 1995, revealed that more than 2.4 million rural Americans—including 1.1 million without indoor plumbing—have the most critical needs for safe, dependable drinking water.

According to RUS Deputy Administrator John Romano, Water 2000 accomplishments thus far include:

- Almost \$1.3 billion in USDA grants and low-interest loans have been committed to more than 1,000 high priority drinking water projects in all but one of the 50 states and Puerto Rico.

Continued on page 3

INSIDE

- ◆ *First Water Sense Survey*
- ◆ *Special Section on the Network of Environmental Finance Centers*

Partnership Unites Rural Resources

*by Kathy Jespersen
NDWC Staff Writer*

With so many different agencies and organizations out there, it's hard to know who's doing what for whom. However, the National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) hopes to change that. In 1990, NRDP began as a nationwide effort to coordinate the varied and mixed government and private resources devoted to rural development.

Organized at two levels—state and national—the partnership pulls together federal, state, local, and tribal governments and the private nonprofit sectors to collaborate on solving rural problems.

"It's the State Rural Development Councils (SRDC) that are the core group of the partnership,"

said Jim Scanlon, director, NRDP. "Their charge is to coordinate and bring in partners, building a coalition at the state level. We're an inclusive group. We want as many resources available as possible."

Keeping Active

Over the past seven years, the partnership has become more active, bringing in new members and encouraging their participation. "We come together to discuss and plan how we can best use the resources we have to solve the problems of the nation's rural areas," said Scanlon. "I think we have a very healthy mix of government and private organizations ready to aid rural communities."

Continued on page 4





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Water Sense

Sponsored by
Rural Utilities
Service

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Wally B. Beyer

Loan Specialist
Donna Roderick

National Drinking Water Clearinghouse

The National Drinking Water Clearinghouse (NDWC) assists small communities by collecting, developing, and providing timely information relevant to drinking water issues. Established in 1991, the NDWC is funded by the Rural Utilities Service and is located at West Virginia University.

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Our Survey Asks, 'How Are We Doing?'

As *Water Sense* enters its fourth year of publication, it's time to ask, "How are we doing?"

Our circulation has grown from less than 1,700 in spring 1995 to approximately 5,000 subscribers now. Readers include officials and staff at all levels of government, financial experts, health department officials, and many people who provide technical or financial assistance to small communities, among others.

To serve this diverse group, we've tried to cover a wide variety of financial topics, many in response to specific requests from readers. Examples include a three-part series on drinking water rates and a "theme issue" on privatization.

Now we want to know what you think of *Water Sense* and to find out what topics you would like to see in future issues. Has *Water Sense* met your expectations? Is the newsletter useful to you?

Enclosed in the center pages of this newsletter is our first readership survey. Please take a few minutes to fill out the postage-paid survey and mail it back to us. We value your opinion. Believe me—your comments *can* make a difference.

Don't forget that you may always call the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse and our sister organizations—the National Small Flows Clearinghouse and the National Environmental Training Center for Small Communities—for technical, regulatory, and financial information and referrals. Our phone number, address, and Web site are listed in the box at left. You may also e-mail me at lklappauf@wvu.edu.

And thanks to all of you—article contributors and readers alike—for helping bring *Water Sense* this far. With your assistance, the newsletter will continue to bring information about drinking water (and wastewater) finance to America's small communities. \$

Laurie Klappauf
Water Sense Editor

Onsite Funding Models, Information Sought

The National Onsite Demonstration Project (NODP), a sister organization of the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse and National Small Flows Clearinghouse, is seeking

information, particularly from counties or local districts, about loan or grant programs to help homeowners finance onsite system repairs or replacement.

"We're assessing the feasibility of conducting demonstration projects featuring local financing programs for septic system repair," says Mike Aiton, coordinator of the project. "If we can put together easy-to-implement models, perhaps other counties or localities can follow them. With a financing program, localities can help to solve problems of failing onsite systems by directing homeowners toward affordable funding."

NODP would like to add to the base of onsite funding information outlined on page 11 of this newsletter. Aiton would like to hear from anyone at the state, county, district, or other local level about successful—or even not-so-successful—attempts to establish onsite funding programs. Some of the questions include: Where did the funds come from to establish the program? What mechanisms were used to promote the program and process loans? What mechanisms are in place to ensure repayment?

Anyone with information to share can contact Aiton at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191. \$

We Want Your Newsletter

Do you publish a newsletter about drinking water in small communities? If so, we'd like to see your latest publication. We would also like you to add the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse (NDWC) to your mailing list.

Mohamed Lahlou, NDWC technical assistance specialist, is gathering information nationwide that will help us monitor issues facing small water systems—those serving fewer than 10,000 people. We plan to use this information to tailor NDWC services and publications to better meet the needs of small community drinking water systems.

Address publications to Mohamed Lahlou, NDWC, P.O. Box 6064, Morgantown, WV 26506-6064. For more information, you may contact Lahlou at (800) 624-8301, ext. 5577, or at mlahlou2@wvu.edu. \$

Water 2000 Makes Progress in Rural America

Continued from page 1

- The average median household income for a family of four in communities receiving Water 2000 investments is approximately \$16,950 (the national poverty income level is currently \$16,050).
- Once they are constructed, the Water 2000 projects funded through September 1997 are estimated to serve more than 1.9 million people, including an estimated 280,000 people who will be receiving water from public sources for the first time.
- The nearly \$1.3 billion in Water 2000 loans and grants have leveraged, or helped bring in, approximately \$437 million in additional investment from other federal, state, and local sources. These additional funds will cover more than 25 percent of total project costs.

So far, most Water 2000 communities have been identified through the 1995 USDA survey or by qualifying for WWD grants or poverty-rate loans, which are made only to recipients in dire need. Rural communities not yet targeted by Water 2000, but with serious drinking water quality, quantity, or dependability problems, may contact their state or district Rural Develop-

ment office. These offices administer the WWD program and provide the local link to the Water 2000 initiative.

These Rural Development offices also work with other federal, state, or local funding sources to put together affordable funding packages that can turn needed drinking water projects into realities.

For more information about Water 2000,

including a list of projects by state, visit the Water 2000 Internet Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/watr2000/index.htm>, or call Handford at (202) 720-1261.

For the number of your state Rural Development office, contact the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse (NDWC) at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191.

You may also call the NDWC to order a free copy of Water 2000: A Plan for Action (request item #DWBLRE02) or a Water 2000 needs assessment chart listing the number of U.S. households that need improved drinking water service and the estimated

costs for delivering that service (request item #DWFSRE09). For additional background information on Water 2000, including previous articles in Water Sense and On Tap, you may call the NDWC and ask to speak to a technical assistant. \$



Every state needs help: This large rusty tank, found in California's Imperial Valley, is used as a pressure tank to pump water in a small Mexican-American community. The water is not treated for impurities or contaminants.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Agriculture

RUS Market Rate Decreases; Others Unchanged

Two of the three interest rates for Rural Utilities Services (RUS) water and wastewater loans remain unchanged this quarter. The market rate decreased slightly.

The RUS interest rates are set quarterly at three different levels, which have specific qualification criteria. The rates for the second quarter of fiscal year 1998 apply to all loans issued from January 1 through March 31, 1998. These rates are:

- *poverty line rate:* 4.5 percent (unchanged from the previous quarter);

- *intermediate rate:* 4.875 percent (unchanged from the previous quarter); and
- *market rate:* 5.25 percent (down .125 from the previous quarter).

RUS loans are administered through local or state Rural Development offices, which can provide specific information about RUS loans and applications.

For the phone number of your state Rural Development office, contact the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191. \$

Partnership Unites Rural Resources

Continued from page 1

The mix includes governmental and private organizations such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Tribes, local governments, community banks, private engineering firms, and many other resources necessary for rural development.

Together, these organizations and agencies form councils at the national and state levels whose success depends on the cooperation of its members. Currently, 36 states have rural development councils.

According to a March 1996 NRDC conference package, the councils don't actually provide services; they primarily concern themselves with issues that affect rural growth. Most SRDC meetings include formal and informal networking opportunities that enable their members to exchange information, discuss how to share resources, and develop collaborative efforts.

"The states are at many different levels in the development of their partnerships," said Scanlon. "And each council responds to the specific needs of its state."

Varied Programs

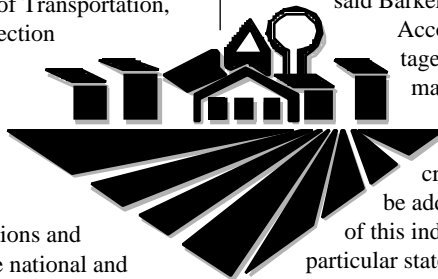
West Virginia, for example, has had a Rural Development Council (WVRDC) for three years. "We have worked extensively with regional planning and development councils, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the West Virginia Development Office, State Soil Conservation Service, and many others, on issues of infrastructure and water development," said Joe Barker, WVRDC director.

Barker said what has made WVRDC successful is not aligning itself with any particular sector—federal, state, local, private, or nonprofit. "While we have representatives from these five sectors, it is having the freedom to make our own decisions that serves us in our collaboration efforts.

"Additionally," Barker continued, "members understand that they can enter and exit the partnership when it is important for them to do so. Participation is driven by the value that individual organizations derive at different times. It is also very important to have leadership that understands and respects the inter-relationships and intersections of work and organizations that impact rural areas."

Another sign of the WVRDC's success is the willingness of the state to fund the council. "For

each of the past three years of the WVRDC's existence, the governor's office has committed funding to help support the council. This contribution has been an average of \$33,000 per year," said Barker.



According to Barker, the advantages of such a partnership are many. "The WVRDC has operated very effectively as an independent forum where cross-cutting rural issues can be addressed," he said. "Because

of this independence, we have no particular stated interest in the outcome of this process. The council has been pivotal in forming and managing a number of collaborative efforts in areas such as rural health and economic development, community development, and welfare reform."

Some of the WVRDC accomplishments include:

- coordinating and providing strategic planning and technical assistance to 15 communities applying for Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) program designation; and
- coordinating the first statewide conference focusing on rural health and economic development.

Taking a Holistic Approach

Around the country, other states are also taking advantage of these partnerships. In Nebraska, Jeff Yost, coordinator for the Nebraska Mandates Management Initiative (NMMI), thinks that his state's Rural Development Commission (NRDC) is "an active player that needs to be kept up and running."

Yost said that the NRDC brought together an extensive group of people with a variety of expertise. Through this collaboration, the commission was able to customize solutions and, thus, do away with the "one-size-fits-all" trend of years past. "We're taking a holistic approach," he said. "We've come together to bring about change, share our best business practices, and share lessons learned. The most unique thing about these councils is that they take different forms everywhere they go."

As a part of the NRDC, NMMI aids Nebraska's rural communities in coping with public health and environmental laws and regulations. "We help these small, rural governments find feasible technical and financial solutions to their problems," said Yost. "We do that through using a team approach, analyzing the situation, and prioritizing the risks."

Continued on next page

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Some of the NMMI's achievements are:

- **Common Finance Preapplication**—This tool is being used by the three largest public sector funding programs of water and wastewater infrastructure. It provides an analysis of least-cost options sooner in the project development process.
- **Community Ability-to-Pay Research/Analysis**—The NRDC is providing detailed analysis of municipal budgets and Census Bureau data to further analyze community ability-to-pay. The University of Nebraska Agricultural Economics Department is using this information to model possible investment scenarios to help local governments optimize the use of limited federal and state loans and grants.
- **Integrated Funding**—Extensive effort is dedicated to integrating and coordinating various funding resources, thereby maximizing financial assistance to communities.

Looking Out for Rural Communities

In Mississippi, the Rural Development Council (MRDC) works through the Governor's Task Force to serve its rural communities. "MRDC has four active task forces and collaborates on state-wide health and education initiatives through the Council for Education Technology, the Mississippi Rural Health Association, and the Governor's Task Force on Drinking Water and Wastewater,

which is a part of Water 2000," said Ora Rawls, executive director for MRDC.

The drinking water and wastewater task force was successful in introducing initiatives that resulted in the state legislature passing four bills, which regulate water and wastewater. These bills are:

- Revisions to the Safe Drinking Water Act that brought the state into compliance;
- The revision to the Operator Certification Law, which requires non-transient, non-community systems to have a certified operator;
- The Water Quality Analysis Fee Program, which funds the laboratory and water quality testing program for water systems; and
- The Board Training Bill, which requires board members to get eight hours of management training beginning July 1, 1998.

"The program initiative will have an impact on water testing as well as education and training for the people who test the water," said Rawls.

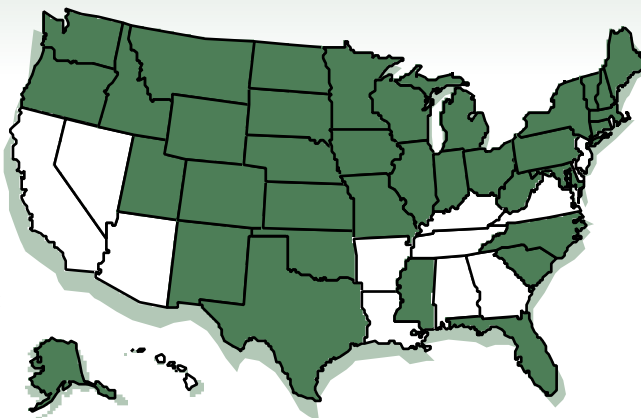
"The larger municipalities seem to have the people they need to get the job done. But the rural systems often just have volunteers. What we want to do is tie state loan and grant programs to water testing. We want to make sure that systems are uniform and the same throughout the state," she continued.

"We have a Management Review Council in place now," Rawls said. "Right now there is no penalty for systems that violate the rules. What

Continued on page 6

State Rural Development Councils Abound

State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs) are active in 36 states. However, most states without an SRDC still have contacts linked to the National Rural Development Partnership. For the number of the contact in your state, contact the National Partnership Office at (202) 690-4749, the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse at (800) 624-8301, or visit the Partnership's Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp>.



Global Symposium Studies Small Systems

NSF International, in conjunction with the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, will hold an international symposium, "Technology, Operations and Economics of Providing Safe Drinking Water in Small Systems," May 10-13, 1998, in Washington, DC. The conference will define obstacles facing small drinking water systems around the world, and

identify the most effective, least-cost solutions to these problems.

The symposium will showcase financing opportunities, practical treatment technologies, and operating procedures that can most efficiently put safe drinking water within reach of many people.

The conference includes technical, poster, and training sessions, and a products exhibition forum.

Outputs of the program will include published proceedings, a compendium of products and manufacturers, treatment technology performance information, financing references, an online reference system, and policy recommendations.

Additional cosponsors include the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse, the National Environmental Training Center for Small Communities, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Water Research Institute, Health Canada, the National Rural Water Association, the American Water Works Association, and the World Bank, among others.

More conference information is available on the Internet at <http://www.nsf.org/symposium>. You may also contact Joseph Cotruvo or Nancy Hearne at (202) 289-2140, or via e-mail at cotruvo@nsf.org or hearne@nsf.org. \$

Call for Papers

Papers are now being accepted for upcoming issues of *The Small Flows Journal*, the only juried technical journal devoted specifically to small community wastewater issues (i.e., communities with populations under 10,000 or communities handling less than one million gallons of wastewater flows per day).

Papers in the following categories will be considered for review:

- technology/research,
- operation and maintenance,
- regulations,
- management,
- finance, and
- public education.

For additional information about the journal, manuscript submission guidelines, and publication deadlines, contact Cathleen Falvey, editor, at (304) 293-4191, ext. 5526, (800) 624-8301, ext. 5526, or via e-mail at cfalvey@wvu.edu. \$

Partnership Unites Rural Resources

Continued from page 5

we want is to give this council the right to impose some kind of penalty when water is unsafe.

"The Emergency Loan Program was set up for systems that need help right away," she added. "When a system has frozen pipes or some kind of contamination that needs to be taken care of immediately, they can get funds from this program."

Rawls said that MRDC meets once a month to discuss the state's rural development needs. "We also make recommendations to the state's legislature about bills that would benefit rural communities and that make laws and regulations uniform for all citizens in the state."

How to Get Started

States that do not have rural development councils in place must make the effort to join, said Scanlon, adding that "states wishing to become a part of the partnership program must

write a letter expressing their desire to join. And the governor must sign off on the proposal.

"The NRDC is funded by many federal agencies, including USDA, Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Administration, and U.S. Department of Transportation," said Scanlon. "The SRDCs are expected to come up with funding on their own as well. State governments are expected to contribute either in kind or cash donations."

Since this article was written, Jim Scanlon retired as director of the NRDC. Allan Gall is currently serving as acting director.

To learn more about the NRDC, call Gall at (202) 690-2394, or tour the NRDC's Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp>. For the phone number of your state's rural development council, or for a contact in states that do not currently have a council, call the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse at (800) 624-8301. \$

EFC Network Tackles “How To Pay” Issues Where To Turn for Help on Environmental Financing

by Bill Jarocki
Director, Boise State University Environmental
Finance Center

Among the challenges we face leading into the new millennium are obtaining funds for environmental protection programs and implementing environmental compliance at the local level. The costs of environmental protection—particularly the construction of water and sewer facilities—are growing rapidly. Yet our nation’s ability to meet these rising costs is falling behind. Consequently, the nation needs to develop long-term funding strategies.

To aid in this effort, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) helped establish a network of Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs) to help communities find creative ways to fund environmental projects. These university-based centers now serve six of EPA’s 10 regions.

EFCs Support Environmental Compliance

In 1992, EPA began establishing EFCs at universities across the country. Today, six centers help state and local officials, tribal governments, small businesses, and others deal with the “how to pay” issues of environmental compliance.

The EFCs operate as a network by sharing staff expertise, programs, and documents, and often collaborate on projects affecting one or more EPA regions. Through training and other activities, these centers share knowledge on how to:

- lower pollution prevention and compliance costs,
- increase investments in environmental protection,
- improve the managerial and financial capacity to own or operate environmental systems,
- adequately price environmental services, and
- identify and evaluate financing tools and options.

Although all of the EFCs seek innovative solutions to environmental finance problems, each tends to have a special area of focus—its own personality, so to speak. The following summarizes the programs and services of these six centers.

Region 6 EFC at the University of New Mexico

Established as the first EFC at the University of New Mexico in 1992, this center serves EPA Region 6 (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas).

The New Mexico EFC has examined the application of public-private partnerships to owning and operating public water and wastewater utility systems. In anticipation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the center provided technical assistance to U.S.-Mexico border communities on ways to reduce costs for basic sanitary services. Additionally, the EFC researched financing alternatives for water systems in colonias, which later served as a guide for a border county to initiate a county-wide utility.

In 1995, the New Mexico EFC field-tested a water and wastewater rate model with several New Mexico communities. Training in the use of this rate model is a mainstay of the EFC’s financial outreach program throughout EPA Region 6.

For the past two years, the center has focused on capacity development requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. In particular, the EFC is helping states in Region 6 design their capacity development strategies (see sidebar, page 8).

Region 3 EFC at the University of Maryland

The Maryland EFC, established in 1993 at the University of Maryland, serves EPA Region 3 (Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia).

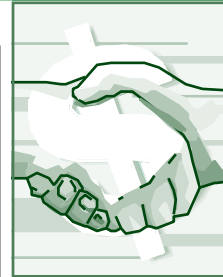
A focus of this EFC has been organizing “charrettes” to help local officials attack and address environmental finance issues seen as limiting their ability to comply with environmental standards. Each of these small, intensive meetings brings together a panel of public finance experts that provides advice and recommendations to local officials.

Case studies compiled from these charrettes provide the EFC network and others who develop training courses with valuable insights on financing problems affecting communities.

The Maryland EFC largely focuses on watershed-based finance issues. In cooperation with the Maryland Office of the Governor, the EFC published *Financing Alternatives for Maryland’s Tributary Strategies*, an assembly of innovative ways to finance the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay. Lessons learned in this effort have contributed to understanding how to solve nonpoint source pollution problems. Recently, the EFC also hosted a teleconference on environmental finance and economic issues.

The EFC is also available for workshop presentations to local officials and others on financing mechanisms for environmental projects.

Continued on page 8



Special
Pullout
Section
on the Network
of Environmental
Finance Centers



You’ll want to keep this four-page reference sheet handy—contact names and numbers, along with Internet Web sites, are listed on page 10.

EFC Network Tackles “How To Pay” Issues

Continued from page 7

Past presentations have touched on financing alternatives for stormwater management, stream corridor restoration, and the use of state revolving funds for the agricultural community.

Region 2 EFC at Syracuse University

EPA Region 2's EFC was set up at Syracuse University in 1993 (serving New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands).

The Syracuse EFC sponsors demonstrations and training programs for environmental officials in the region and reaches local governments through presentations to professional associations and membership organizations on such topics as:

- public finance,
- capacity development,
- water and wastewater rate setting, and
- environmental governance.

The EFC has also helped communities learn how to use an EPA-supported computer software program—developed specifically for water and wastewater systems—to set financially responsible water and wastewater rates.

The EFC's collaborative efforts include work with the New York State Rural Development Council on capacity development for drinking water. (*For more on state rural development councils, see the article beginning on page 1 of this newsletter.*)

The EFC is also part of an academic consortium that provides training and other assistance to communities. Current projects focus on capacity development of community water supply systems, watershed management, and the development of strategies for Source Water Assessment and Protection required in the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act.

Most recently, the Syracuse EFC has been collaborating with other groups to identify sources of environmental conflict and seek ways to resolve those conflicts. The center is planning discussion forums on this topic in 1998.

This EFC is currently planning an analysis of the finance programs in New York for the Department of State.

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EFCs Aid in Capacity Development

The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) make it clear that all public water systems should have the financial, managerial, and technical ability, or “capacity,” to comply with regulations and provide safe drinking water over the long-term. States must develop and implement strategies to improve the capability of new and existing systems or risk losing some federal funds.

However, many questions remain about just how to implement these “capacity development strategies.” That's where the Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs) are helping out.

Capacity Development Strategies. The New Mexico and Idaho EFCs are working with several states to develop capacity development strategies required by the SDWA. EFC staff are currently working with state drinking water officials and public water systems in Arkansas, Alaska, Idaho, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.

“This project will help the states in these regions meet the capacity development strategy goals and will provide important examples for other states in the west and across the nation to examine,” says Bill Jarocki, director of the Idaho EFC. “The assistance comes at the right time for states that have not been able to add staff to meet the new SDWA program requirements.”

He points out that the New Mexico EFC helped the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission develop its Capacity Development Strategy Report that was issued on August 29, 1997.

Financial Capacity Building. The success of the SDWA depends on the effective operation of individual public water systems. A thorough understanding of drinking water rates is crucial. The EFC's training and education programs help utility managers design equitable water rates and learn how to match financing mechanisms to capital projects. More than 20 local rate-setting training sessions have been conducted in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regions 2, 6, and 10 using computer software—RateMod Pro™—developed by Michael Siegel of RateMod Associates, in conjunction with the EPA and the EFC Network.

Currently, three EFCs (at Syracuse University, Boise State University, and the University of New Mexico) provide financial management training and technical assistance to public water systems. It is expected that by the end of 1998, five EFCs will have programs to help public water systems meet financial capacity standards.

For more information, contact the EFC nearest you—see page 10. \$

Continued from previous page

Region 9 EFC at California State University–Hayward

The Region 9 EFC is based at California State University, Hayward (serving Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and American Samoa and Guam).

This EFC is geared toward the private sector. It helps entrepreneurs, investors, and financial managers—public and private—learn how to make the best of business and investment opportunities in the environmental industry.

Through conferences, seminars, course development, and financial research, the EFC shares expertise on:

- public/private partnerships,
- the transfer of environmental technology from laboratories to the private business sector,
- innovative “green” financing techniques, and
- ways for business entrepreneurs to capitalize on environmental business opportunities and achieve regulatory compliance.

The center also promotes the adoption of pollution prevention technology by existing businesses.

Region 5 EFC at Cleveland State University

Also known as the Great Lakes EFC, this center was established at Cleveland State University in 1995, and serves EPA Region 5 (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota).

This EFC’s major focus has been on brownfield site redevelopment—seeking financial tools and incentives to spur investment in abandoned commercial and industrial sites. These sites are a major constraint to the redevelopment of central city neighborhoods, which desperately need new jobs and investment. The issue is a top priority in the Great Lakes region, including many small and medium-sized cities.

Other areas of importance for the EFC are ecological design, comprehensive community planning, and market-based pollution prevention, which are emerging strategies many cities are examining to achieve more cost effective environmental cleanup-up goals.

The EFC’s technical assistance and training services are targeted not only to the public sector, but also increasingly to banks, insurance companies, environmental consultants, law firms, and other private sector businesses serving the environmental industry.

The center provides expert advisory services to communities developing brownfield redevelopment strategies. It is also working with the metal finishing industry on pollution prevention issues.

Region 10 EFC at Boise State University

The newest EFC was created in 1995 at Boise State University. It serves EPA Region 10 (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska).



This EFC helps communities and the states with the “how to pay” issues of environmental protection. The center is taking the lead nationally in designing and testing drinking water system capacity assessment methodologies required by the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (*see sidebar, page 8*).

Other priorities of the Region 10 EFC include:

- Providing workshops, conferences, training seminars, and formal education programs to help public and private sector leaders resolve environmental finance dilemmas;
- Preparing and disseminating practical guides, handbooks, and reports on environmental finance and management issues;
- Helping local and tribal governments and other public water and wastewater systems find new ways, other than taxes, to finance environmental protection;
- Educating federal and state policy makers about the unique financial needs of small communities, and explaining financial tools that might help them meet regulatory compliance standards.

The EFC also tests and then suggests new tools and assistance mechanisms that could be used by local, state, and federal governments. \$

RateMod Pro™ developer Michael Siegel (left) offers advice to Jon Cecil, city administrator for Jerome, Idaho, on the use of the software during a rate-setting workshop put on by the Boise State University Environmental Finance Center.



How To Contact the EFC Network

For more information about services, programs, publications, and assistance offered by the Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs), please contact any of the following:

Region 2 EFC at Syracuse University

Syracuse, New York
<http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/exed/efc>

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 (315) 443-5330 FAX
wjsulliv@maxwell.syr.edu

Kim Collins, Program Manager

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Region 3 EFC at the University of Maryland

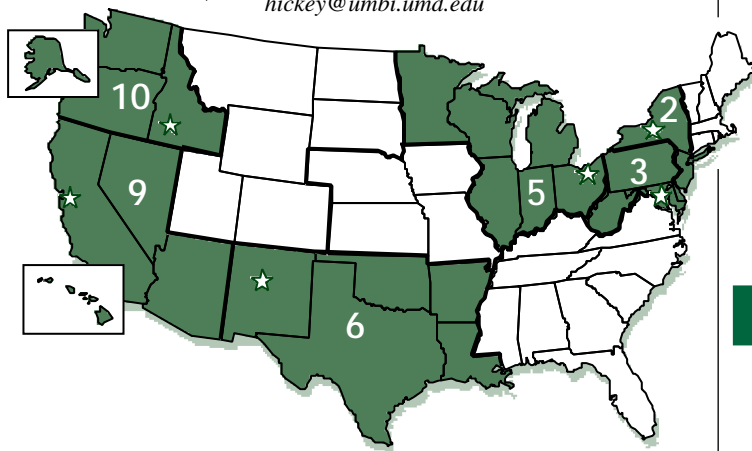
College Park, Maryland
<http://www.mdsg.umd.edu/MDSG/EFC/index.html>

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This map reflects the six U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regions currently served by Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs). Even though you may not be served by an EFC in your region, services are available from the other EFCs—contact anyone on this page to learn more.

Additional information about the EFC network and other assistance offered by EPA is available on the Environmental Finance Program Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/efinpage/>.

Region 5 EFC at Cleveland State University

Cleveland, Ohio
<http://www.csuohio.edu/glefc/>

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Region 6 EFC at the University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico
<http://nmeri.unm.edu/ta/efc.htm>

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Region 9 EFC at California State University at Hayward

Hayward, California
<http://barney.sbe.csu Hayward.edu/~efc9/>

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Region 10 EFC at Boise State University

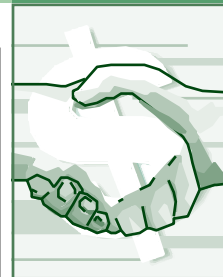
Boise, Idaho
<http://www.idbsu.edu/sspa/efc/>

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Clean Water SRF Funds Onsite, Other Projects

An increasing number of states and localities are offering funding programs to help individuals repair or replace failing septic systems. Most often, these programs offer low-interest loans or grants, particularly for rural residents meeting specific income or health protection requirements.

Funding for these programs may come from a variety of sources. One such source is the clean water state revolving fund (CWSRF), a revolving loan program run by states and set up with "seed money" from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Over the past decade, the CWSRF has most commonly been used to fund wastewater treatment projects—so far, states have made approximately \$17 billion in wastewater treatment loans from their CWSRFs.

However, the fund is increasingly being used to support other watershed-based projects that help protect groundwater resources. According to a recent EPA booklet, *The Clean Water State Revolving Fund: How to Fund Nonpoint Source and Estuary Enhancement Projects*, such "expanded use" projects include implementation of agricultural best management practices and storm water management to reduce nonpoint sources of pollution, landfill reclamation and closures, and wetland protection and restoration projects, among others.

The booklet highlights 17 states that have provided a total of \$531 million in CWSRF assistance to fund projects aimed at protecting surface and groundwater.

Among these are the following programs to help individual homeowners repair or replace failing septic systems:

Delaware has a septic tank rehabilitation program to finance rehabilitation of malfunctioning or failing septic systems.

Maine helps fund the replacement of failed individual septic systems to protect groundwater and public health.

Massachusetts provides loans to replace failed individual septic systems to protect groundwater, private drinking water supplies, and public health.

Pennsylvania runs an individual on-lot sewage disposal system program, offering loans to correct problems with on-lot disposal systems.

Virginia is launching an onsite wastewater treatment and disposal program, beginning with a pilot program providing loans to repair or replace malfunctioning or inadequate onsite wastewater treatment systems.

Washington uses CWSRF funds to help repair or replace septic systems or onsite disposal systems to reduce nonpoint source pollution caused by failing septic systems.

Contacts for these and other projects are included in the booklet.

To order a free copy of The Clean Water State Revolving Fund: How to Fund Nonpoint Source and Estuary Enhancement Projects, call the National Center for Environmental Publications and Information (NCEPI) at (513) 489-8190 or (800) 490-9198 and request document EPA 909-K-97-001. \$

NSFC Onsite Survey Identifies Funding Programs

At least 18 states offer some sort of funding program to help homeowners replace failing onsite systems or install new ones, according to a survey conducted by the National Small Flows Clearinghouse (NSFC). Each year, the NSFC sends a survey to each state's onsite regulator to learn about regulations, types of technologies used, fees and permits, certification requirements, training, and other activities related to onsite systems. All but nine states responded to the summer 1997 survey. These results have been compiled, in state-by-state order, in *A Guide to State-Level Onsite Regulations* (September 1997).

The survey asked each state onsite regulator if there were "any funding programs or mechanisms (i.e., grants, loans) available to assist homeowners replacing failing systems or installing new systems." Respondents in the following states indicated that they were aware of such a program, and provided contact names: Connecticut, Delaware, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Funding for these programs comes from a variety of sources, including the clean water state revolving fund described in the story above, and other federal, state, and local sources.

To find out about funding programs for septic system repairs or replacements in your state, contact the NSFC at (800) 624-8301. To share information about such programs in your state or locality, call Crystal Stevens at the NSFC or Mike Aiton at the National Onsite Demonstration Project at the same number (*also see article on page 2*).

To order A Guide to State-Level Onsite Regulations, call the NSFC at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191 and request Item #WWBKRG01. The cost is \$12.50; shipping and handling charges will apply. \$



MAP Offers Environmental Guidebook

by Natalie Eddy
NDWC Contributing Writer

Small communities looking for a way to improve their own environmental infrastructure may find assistance through a new guidebook developed by the Midwest Assistance Program (MAP).

The 43-page guidebook, titled *The ACTIVE Cities Guidebook* (A CommuniTy InVolvemEnt Environmental Effort), was designed as a practical tool to help small community officials assess their own environmental infrastructure through self-analysis. MAP serves as the midwestern Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP), providing technical assistance to help rural and small communities meet their drinking water and wastewater needs.

Paula E. Liepold, MAP communications specialist, commented, "In small communities today there are many difficult challenges and many issues to be addressed. Often small community leaders must take on several roles to address these challenges and issues.

"Sometimes it can be difficult to resolve these problems. In the ACTIVE Cities process, local officials take part in a process of reviewing regulations, identifying environmental and public health issues, and prioritizing issues based on risk and local concern. Through this process, they can understand better how to plan and solve the problems."

Majority of the Nation Is Rural

One-third of all U.S. local governments do not have any employees, and 97 percent of the nation's land mass is classified as rural, according to the guidebook's introduction, which quotes a 1993 Interstate Council on Water Policy paper.

The guidebook states, "The United States has an estimated 39,529 general purpose governments; 86 percent serve fewer than 10,000 people. Ninety million people live within jurisdictions whose populations are less than 10,000, and 74

million people live in communities whose populations number less than 2,500."

It adds that many of these small governments are responsible for wastewater treatment and other regulated environmental concerns.

Some problems they face include the following:

- Systems are often under-capitalized and communities are unable to meet legislative and regulatory requirements for water quality and quantity.
- Small customer bases limit revenues needed to make improvements.

- The isolated nature of systems makes it unfeasible to connect to larger, more viable, systems.

Take Action

The *ACTIVE Cities Guidebook* explains how small communities can identify and find solutions to their own environmental problems using the following steps:

1. Organize the community.
2. Conduct a comprehensive community evaluation.
3. Identify environmental issues and rank them based on risk and local priorities.
4. Identify solutions.
5. Develop action plans and implementation schedules.
6. Implement the action plan.

How the Process Works

The ACTIVE Cities process consists of six steps and can be completed in as few or as many meetings as the community needs. The process is as follows:

- Organize the community.
- Conduct a comprehensive community evaluation.
- Identify environmental issues and rank them based on risk and local priorities.
- Identify solutions for the prioritized environmental and public health concerns.
- Develop action plans and implementation schedules for each identified environmental and public health issue.
- Implement the action plan.

Some issues that need to be covered by a council or an appointed citizen committee include: wastewater, drinking water, solid waste, wetlands, wellhead protection, underground storage tanks, hazardous waste, radon, and the impact of industry on the community's environmental surroundings. Holding public meetings throughout the process increases the effectiveness of the program and encourages citizen involvement.

The guidebook notes that in some cases where noncompliance with environmental regulations is a factor, the community action plan may be the

Continued on next page

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basis for a negotiated compliance plan with the appropriate state regulatory agency.

After a community ranks each issue, cost-effective and appropriate solutions need to be identified.

Funding Is the Final Piece of the Puzzle

Once a community agrees on a solution, the final piece of the puzzle is to find the available funding for the project. A schedule to finance and implement the improvements should be written into an action plan.

The costs to be financed may include not only construction but administrative, legal, and engineering costs, as well as other expenses like land acquisition. The community also must consider ongoing operation and maintenance costs for a facility.

The money may come from one source, according to the guidebook, but will likely come from a combination of sources, including:

- Federal grant and loan programs;
- State funding sources, such as grants, revolving loan programs, and bond banks;
- Local bond issues;
- Cash on hand;
- Property assessments;
- Cost sharing with major users;
- Loans from banks;
- Bond or grant anticipation notes; and
- User fees.

Pilot Program Initiated Guidebook

The ACTIVE Cities Guidebook grew out of a pilot program financed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 8. MAP, in collaboration with the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and EPA, encouraged five small South Dakota communities to establish their own environmental priorities, based on a comprehensive community-based environmental planning process.

One of these communities, the 128-person town of Yale, is profiled in the guidebook. Using the ACTIVE Cities process, a focus group identified water source issues and the lack of a certified water operator as the town's top two priorities. The group also proposed solutions, such as connecting to a nearby regional system, and listed steps needed to accomplish these and several other environmental priorities.

At one point, the head of the DENR even attended a meeting of the focus group to discuss Yale's difficulties in complying with environmental regulations and clarify DENR's position on grant criteria, interest in flexibility, and other issues.

"As a result of the meeting, greater understanding was achieved by the ACTIVE Cities focus group, the community and the DENR secretary on each other's positions regarding environmental compliance," states the guidebook. "Each party came away with a clearer understanding of the other's perspective."

Although the town still experiences some frustrations, focus group members feel that at least now they have tools to identify and deal with their problems and "take charge of their future."

The pilot program grew out of the EPA document *Environmental Planning For Small Communities: A Guide for Local Decision-Makers*, which was developed as a general source of environmental planning for small community leaders. (*It is available from the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse. For additional information see end of story.*)

The guidebook differs from the original EPA document in that it provides a more "step-by-step" approach to environmental planning, according to Liepold. Both documents include appendices listing additional sources of help.

Liepold said, "*The ACTIVE Cities Guidebook* was written to complement communities in the work that they do, understanding that they have a lot of jobs to do.

"As you read the booklet, you learn more about the community-based environmental approach. It is very exciting. It is not like one person solving a problem. It's more of a community of local citizens reviewing issues and prioritizing them, then determining solutions."

She added that the guidebook is designed to help community officials nationwide respond to and prevent an environmental problem before it becomes a public safety threat.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the guidebook, contact Liepold at MAP at (800) 822-2981. Cost of the guidebook is \$7.50.

Copies of Environmental Planning for Small Communities: A Guide for Local Decision-Makers can be obtained from the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse by calling (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191. Ask for item #DWBKMG14. The cost for the 159-page book is \$23, plus shipping and handling. This document can also be downloaded from EPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/ORD/smallcom.html>. \$

The success or failure of this process depends on several key factors:

- ✓ *Involve the public*
- ✓ *Consider all the options*
- ✓ *Estimate the project cost*
- ✓ *Evaluate and choose the option right for your community*
- ✓ *Develop a plan for financing the project*
- ✓ *Implement*



Catalog Provides Watershed Funding Sources

The *Catalog of Federal Funding Sources for Watershed Protection* provides information for state and local watershed professionals and groups on federal funding programs that may assist them in funding various aspects of watershed protection and local-level watershed projects. The catalog contains one-page fact sheets for each of the 52 sources for grants and loans that indicate what types of activities are funded and who is eligible. Contacts and Internet sites are also provided for each program, as well as additional publications and Web sites on funding.

Copies of the document are available for free from the National Center for Environmental Publications and Information (NCEPI) in Cincinnati. Call (513) 489-8190 or (800) 490-9198 and request U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) document EPA841-B-97-008. You may also fax to (513) 489-8695. This document is also available on the Watershed Academy home page at <http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/wacademy/fund.html>. \$

Pipeline Resources Poster Now Available

A new poster illustrating various informational resources available for small communities is free by request from the National Small Flows Clearinghouse (NSFC). Sent to subscribers of NSFC's *Pipeline* with the Fall 1997 issue, the poster depicts drinking water, wastewater, financial, and environmental training resources available from the NSFC and its "sister" organizations: the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse (NDWC)

and the National Environmental Training Center for Small Communities.

According to *Pipeline* editor Cathie Falvey, "The poster can serve as a guide for anyone wanting to locate information about the options and resources that exist for small communities."

The poster also serves as a "visual index" of previous *Pipeline* issues and other newsletters, including NDWC's *Water Sense* and *On Tap*. Some of the topics covered in the newsletters are drinking water, financing and funding, training for system operators, hiring consultants, and public health, to name a few. A brief description of each newsletter is provided, along with the volume and number of the relevant issue, its item number, and cost, if any.

To receive a poster, call the NSFC at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191, and ask for Item #WWPSPE36. You may also request a copy via e-mail at nsfc_orders@estd.wvu.edu. Shipping and handling charges will apply. \$



NATaT Offers Source Water Funding Guide

The National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) has developed a guide to help local elected officials understand how recent federal legislation provides them with an opportunity to protect and preserve local water supplies through a source water protection program.

NATaT's National Center for Small Communities produced *Action Guide for Source Water Funding* to promote timely involvement by local and county officials.

The guide:

- summarizes local source water protection responsibilities and strategies;
- explains opportunities for local governments available through the Safe Drinking Water Act; and

- identifies key points at which local, timely input can help determine state-based source water priorities and set-aside funding levels to benefit municipal and county governments over the next five years.

To obtain a free copy of this guide, contact NATaT at (202) 624-3550 or fax (202) 624-3554. You may also write to the National Center for Small Communities, 444 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 294, Washington, DC 20001.

The National Drinking Water Clearinghouse (NDWC) also offers the guide for free; however, shipping charges are added. To order, call the NDWC at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191 and request item #DWBLFN12. You also may order via e-mail at ndwc_orders@ndwc.wvu.edu. \$

Report Lists Wastewater Funding Sources

A new publication describes 10 federal programs that offer financial and technical assistance to help small communities plan, design, and build water and wastewater systems. The 28-page report, *Federal Funding Sources for Small Community Wastewater Systems*, can help state, tribal, and local officials identify possible funding sources.

Each entry includes a description of the federal funding agency, the type of assistance provided, the type of projects that are funded, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and contact information, including toll-free numbers and Web sites, where appropriate.

Although the focus is on wastewater, descriptions of a few drinking water programs are included.

Compiled by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the document is available at no charge from the National Small Flows Clearinghouse. To order, call (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191 and request item #FMBLNF29. E-mail orders may be sent to nafc_orders@estd.wvu.edu. Shipping and handling charges will apply.

The document may also be viewed and printed, one page at a time, from EPA's National Environmental Publication Information Site at <http://www.epa.gov/cincl/>. \$



Report Outlines Wastewater Privatization

A recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) document outlines some of the issues and options involved in deciding whether to privatize wastewater treatment facilities.

The July 1997 report, *Response to Congress on Privatization of Wastewater Facilities*, was developed at the request of Congress to examine the use of public-private partnerships as a source of funds to meet current and future wastewater infrastructure needs. Current and projected federal and state funding levels are not expected to adequately meet these needs. A 1996 EPA survey estimated these water quality infrastructure needs at more than \$139 million over the next 20 years.

The 38-page report summarizes the most common types of privatization, its appeal, federal requirements and other factors affecting the decision to privatize, and impediments to privatization. Five case studies of public-private partnership arrangements, with contact names and phone numbers, are also included.

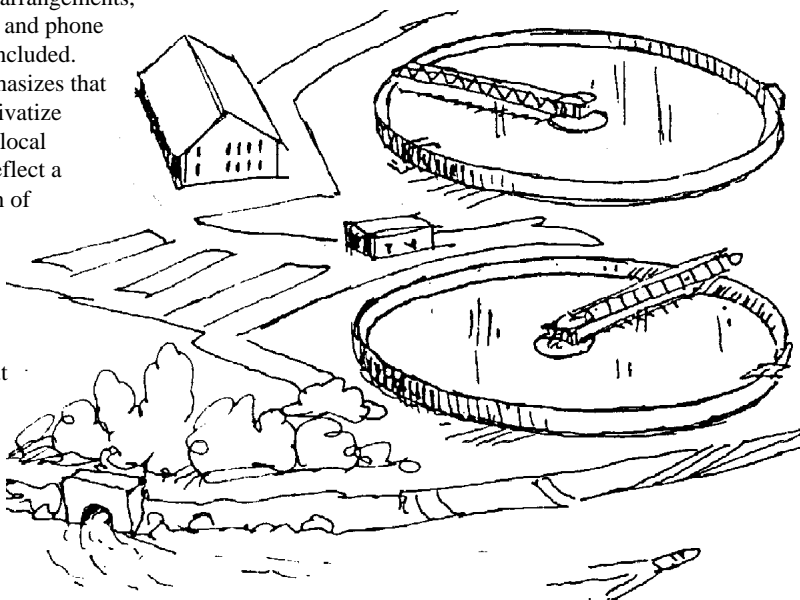
The report emphasizes that "The decision to privatize should be made by local governments and reflect a balanced evaluation of the financial, non-financial, and other issues and the needs of the community."

It also points out that "any wastewater capital funds obtained through either government or private sources

must be repaid by the wastewater users. Thus, privatization is never a source of 'free' capital."

To order a free copy of the report, contact the National Center for Environmental Publications at (513) 489-8190 or (800) 490-9198 and request document EPA 832/R-97-001a. You may also fax orders to (513) 489-8695. The report can also be viewed online from EPA's National Environmental Publication Information Site at <http://www.epa.gov/cincl/>.

The Summer 1997 "theme issue" of Water Sense was also devoted to privatization. For a free copy of this issue, call the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191 and request item #WSENSE11. Shipping and handling charges will apply. You may also download the newsletter from the NDWC Web site at <http://www.ndwc.wvu.edu>. \$



Water Sense

News & Features

Water 2000 Makes Progress in Rural America, page 1



Partnership Unites Rural Resources, page 1



EFC Network Tackles 'How To Pay' Issues; Where To Turn for Help on Environmental Finance, page 7



MAP Offers Environmental Guidebook, page 12

Departments

Water Sense Page, page 2



RUS Rates, page 3



Onsite Wastewater Funding, page 11



Resources, pages 6, 14-16

NDWC Offers Water 2000 Products

The following products can be ordered from the National Drinking Water Clearinghouse by calling (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191. E-mail orders can be sent to ndwc_orders@estd.wvu.edu.

These free products are limited to one of each per order. Actual shipping and handling charges will be added. Please allow two to four weeks for delivery.

■ **Water 2000: A Plan for Action**
Item #DWBLRE02

An outline of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) initiative to have "safe, affordable drinking water in virtually every home—no matter how remote and distressed" by the year 2000, this booklet discusses the reasons

behind a lack of water access, federal and technical assistance resources, and long-term solutions to community water problems. (1995, 19 pages)

Cost: \$0.00

■ **Water 2000: Rural Safe Drinking Water Needs Assessment**

Item #DWFSRE09

This chart provides a state-by-state listing of USDA's 1995 Water 2000 needs assessment. The chart gives the estimated financial cost of each state to supply adequate drinking water service to all residents. The number of households in need is listed for each state. (1995, 2 pages)

Cost: \$0.00

NDWC Discussion Group Is Online

Do you want to talk about drinking water? The National Drinking Water Clearinghouse (NDWC) now provides an online discussion group for professionals and other individuals with an interest in small community drinking water issues at <http://www.ndwc.wvu.edu>.

This forum is open to anyone wishing to post drinking water related questions and receive feedback from other users. An NDWC engineer will review the forum several times a week.

However, this is a discussion group and not an alternative hotline. If you have specific questions that require

the expertise of an engineer, we encourage you to call the NDWC at (800) 624-8301 or (304) 293-4191 and ask to speak with a technical assistance specialist.

The NDWC Web site also describes services provided by the clearinghouse. It includes links to other relevant sites, and offers online access to the *Water Sense* and *On Tap* newsletters and the *NDWC Products Catalog*. \$

EPA Now Offers 6,000 Publications Online

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Environmental Publication Information Site (NEPI) now offers online access to 6,000 EPA publications at <http://www.epa.gov/cincl>. \$

National Drinking Water Clearinghouse

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