

Fall 2018



RURAL MATTERS

The magazine of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership

Storm Season:
USDA Rural
Water Infrastructure

Back to School
Volunteers for Change:
An Alternative Spring Break

WASTE

Recycling in Puerto Rico

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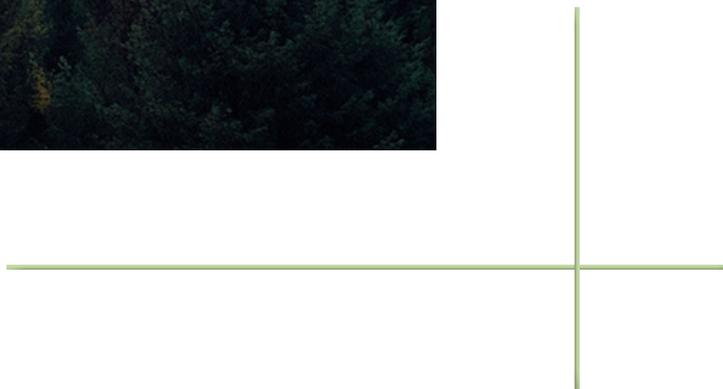
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COLORADO IDAHO MONTANA NEW MEXICO WYOMING

A Partnership to Value



Nathan Ohle, RCAP Executive Director

In this issue of Rural Matters, you will read about the incredible range of work happening across the country focused on water infrastructure, solid waste, and so much more. These issues are paramount to the future of rural communities, and without the technical assistance that RCAP brings to

the communities we serve, many towns would struggle to maintain their quality of life. Estimates are that upgrading deteriorating water systems will cost \$1 trillion over the next twenty years. These infrastructure improvements will directly affect rural communities. There are more than fifty thousand water providers across the US, of which eighty-three percent serve populations of less than 3,330 and fifty-five percent serve less than five hundred. For small rural communities, when compared to more densely populated areas, these issues are more expensive due to fewer ratepayers and are more challenging due to lack of capacity. This is a big reason why our work is so important.

RCAP partners with communities in every state across the country, including Puerto Rico, helping to both manage and

maintain water and wastewater systems and solid waste disposal, but RCAP also assists in procuring the funding necessary to make critical infrastructure upgrades. As a part of that financing, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a tremendous partner to RCAP and these communities by ensuring they can obtain funding to meet their needs and to guarantee the safety of drinking water and wastewater systems for small towns. USDA currently has more than \$4 billion in financing available for small rural communities, and RCAP is working closely to ensure that those communities can access those funds and start upgrading systems wherever possible. RCAP offers communities resources, guides, and support to help walk them through the process from beginning to end: from applying for funding to preparing for the future.



Without these investments, water and wastewater systems will continue to fall further behind, causing additional and more costly problems down the road. There are an estimated 240,000 water main breaks per year in the U.S., wasting more than two trillion gallons of treated drinking water. That means that every day, we lose nearly six billion gallons of treated drinking water, an amount could support fifteen million households. These and many other issues will continue to get worse without the necessary upgrades to water systems.

We cannot ignore this issue, but it is also an issue that cannot be solved alone. RCAP partners with USDA and many others to help communities access funding, and to ensure that water and wastewater systems are sustainable in the long-run. Without

access to safe drinking water or sanitary wastewater disposal, no business will grow or locate in a community. Often the water or wastewater facility in a rural community will be the single most significant capital investment that town will ever make, and so it cannot be taken lightly. The ability to afford infrastructure upgrades is vital to ensuring that the region continues to thrive. RCAP works closely with communities to ensure that they understand the cost to maintain their water or wastewater system, with technical assistance and training focused on the technical, managerial, and financial needs of every community.

This is the core of the work that we do, and the base for additional work focused on capacity building for rural communities. This work continues to grow, as the need is great, and we

look forward to continuing to be a great partner to great communities. The goal is always to see every community we work with thrive long-term, and this issue of Rural Matters continues to highlight that great work happening across the country.

Thanks for continuing to be our partner!





Edwin Vazquez-Asencio



Dumped

Household Waste in Puerto Rico

With the assistance of a few community volunteers from Barrio Collores, Pontifical Catholic University students, and municipal representatives, the Puerto Rico team of RCAP's northeast region, RCAP Solutions, conducted an electronic (e-waste) and Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection initiative for the residents of the Juana Diaz municipality.

As part of a solid waste program, funded by USDA Rural Development,

RCAP educates communities about the negative impacts of household hazardous waste and its effects on the environment and public health. The organization looks at ways to promote local participation in regular recycling activities with the goal of avoiding the improper disposal of these materials. Many materials can be recycled and taken out of the waste stream, but many residents do not know which items to recycle or how and where to recycle them.

After evaluating the data collected during past RCAP cleanup events, and day-by-day evaluation of illegal dumping sites, RCAP discovered a need for education related to e-waste specifically. Interaction with community members and other participants has demonstrated the fact that there is a

lack of knowledge on the topic, leading to the creation of illegal dumping sites, and intermixing of these products into the normal waste stream and landfill system. RCAP organized this small e-waste collection event to educate residents and make improvements in this area.

On December 21, 2017, in collaboration with the Juana Diaz municipality, RCAP hosted the event to recover old electronics and other hazardous household waste. Over 2,880 pounds of electronics were collected to be properly processed and recycled. Though not all waste was able to be recycled it was also collected and disposed of properly. While the event only lasted for four hours, the amount of e-waste that did not end up illegally dumped was considerable. The non-conforming items that could not be recycled were also disposed of according to the guidance in the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CRF) and all other applicable regulations for each material type.

“This activity is something that I was looking forward to for a long time; I had a huge old TV sitting in my house because I didn’t know what I was going to do with it!”

Non-conforming items are not easy to identify and depend on many factors associated with the local recycler, the current market or the item’s condition. Some of them, like old TV’s with “cathodic tubes” are depreciated in the market, and the options for selling their components are only viable in countries with growing economies like India, Indonesia or Malaysia. It is very expensive to export large items from Puerto Rico to these distant locations. These challenges complicate best practices in the industry and the sheer volume of these kinds of items was obvious



the day of the e-waste collection: the quantity of these items exceeded the quantity of items diverted from the waste stream to recycling facilities by a multiple of at least three.

Some items are harder to identify as recyclable or non-conforming because if an item, like a printer, contains an ink cartridge, some recyclers cannot accept it. They must separate out the cartridges and may not have the means to dispose of them properly; the market at this moment for ink cartridges is also limited. EPA helped dispose of many of the HHW items that could not be recycled, but ink alone could not be received for their disposal process, so it was necessary in these instances to forgo the recycling alternative of printers solely because they still contained ink.

The materials recovered were treated according to regulations and will not end up in the local municipal landfill, a landfill not suitable for these kinds of toxic materials. This event was successful because residents, students and municipal staff were educated about electronic waste and household hazardous waste. Materials were diverted from

the main waste stream and their impact in limited landfills was reduced, improving both the environment and protecting public health.

“This activity is something that I was looking forward to for a long time; I had a huge old TV sitting in my house because I didn’t know what I was going to do with it!”

“I was one who used to remove the batteries from a radio, a flash light or a remote control and throw them in the trash can, as well as light bulbs...after our last radio interview, I now the batteries and bulbs in a Ziploc bag, and then I take them to the recycling center; now I know not to mix these items with the regular garbage.”

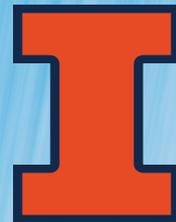
-Karina Zayas, Host of the Radio Program in WPAB-550 AM.





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WaterOperator.org aggregates the best resources on the web for small system operators in a free, user-friendly location. With 11,000+ training events added annually and 17,000+ free resources indexed in the database, our staff maintain updated information from more than 800 state and national organizations. The program is a collaboration between the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, with funding from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.



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Storm

Feature
USDA Loans

From Hurricanes, Tornadoes, Mudslides, & Beyond: The Loan Requirement that is So Much More

Karen Thomas

The images we have seen lately in the news from natural disasters and other emergencies show catastrophic destruction to homes, buildings, and entire cities. Many of the towns affected by these disasters have been prepared for this type of emergency. However, we also hear about some that were, very obviously, not. Although an emergency response plan is not required for communities whose systems service under 3,300 people, it is in the best interest of public safety to have one. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) understands the importance of having an updated

emergency response plan and a vulnerability assessment for these small water and wastewater systems and has made it one of the conditions of their loans. As a technical assistance provider to these water and wastewater systems in North Dakota, one of my responsibilities is to assist communities that have been recognized by USDA RD as needing assistance maintaining the conditions of their loan. Besides an updated emergency response plan, several responsibilities come with these water and wastewater loans; most of which are financial. The financial responsibilities require assisting the city auditor with the completion of several financial reports for that utility and occasionally, a rate study. But the loan condition that tends to be overlooked most is the maintenance of an up-to-date emergency response plan and vulnerability assessment. Helping these communities either create a new plan, or update an existing one, not only assists them with being compliant with their loan, but it is an opportunity to bring awareness of emergency preparedness. It is important when meeting with these communities to ask when the documents were last updated and if they know where they are located. Some of the rural communities that I have assisted have misplaced, forgotten about, or have no knowledge of their emergency response plan and/or vulnerability assessment. Every two years there are usually a few newly elected city officials who simply are unaware of the loan details. There also tends to be a high turnover rate for rural water operators and city clerks. This turnover creates a lack of knowledge regarding the requirements of their USDA RD loan. Some of the communities I have worked with are aware of this requirement and request our assistance merely because they do not have the time or manpower to get it done. One city auditor states, "Midwest Assistance Program's technical assistance has been a much-needed lifeline for our small community for helping us manage our USDA RD loan." This has also been an excellent opportunity to introduce communities to new ideas for mitigation planning. For example, many cities in the past have listed the local grocery store as the only backup source of drinking water in their emergency response plan. I have suggested to these





m Season

communities to start a dialogue with a neighboring town and create an agreement for purchasing or hauling water if there is an extended period of water loss. Just relying on bottled water may not be the best plan of action. I have also suggested becoming a member of WARN, which many small communities in North Dakota do not take advantage of. Another interesting outcome of creating these emergency response plans and vulnerability assessments has been a new or rekindled interest in emergency preparedness and in these communities. After the city councils have had a chance to review the updated documents, it has been pointed out that they were more receptive to make needed changes to the water or wastewater system. One wastewater operator mentioned that because the lack of a generator was listed as a potential vulnerability for their wastewater system, it opened up the discussion to start saving money or find the financing to purchase one for their lift station. Before the assessment, the council had voted against the investment of a generator. For another community, listing a broken door to the pump house as a vulnerability was the extra push that the water operator needed to convince the council to approve the expense of replacing the damaged door. “We strongly believe that your services and on the ground support are absolutely necessary for continued improvement in America’s rural water and wastewater systems.” Lastly, creating emergency response plans has been made easy with the availability of templates, such as those produced by RCAP. However, taking the time to customize sections of the document and addressing specific impact events that an

individual community is prone to, makes the report even more valuable. Talking to the water operators and researching past emergencies in that geographic area gave me the knowledge I needed to know which action response events should be emphasized. A community along the Maple River in North Dakota has had damage to their water and wastewater infrastructure in the past due to flooding. Their public works supervisor said, “Having a technical assistance provider from MAP update our emergency response plan was simple, easy, and brought to light a couple of things that we had not thought of in regards to planning for a flood event.” The flooding events in this area are well documented and relatively regular in occurrence. By adding additional information from other resources, such as the EPA website, to the emergency response plan, these flood-prone communities are more prepared for their next flood event. By taking a little more time and effort to create documents that go beyond meeting just the essential criterion required by USDA RD, the communities are given the knowledge and confidence to continue looking for ways to be prepared. It also brings awareness to those members that may have become complacent or just did not have prior knowledge of emergency preparedness. In conclusion, by assisting rural communities in their effort to maintain compliance with the terms and conditions of their USDA RD loans, we are not just helping them complete a list of required documents. We are making these communities a healthier and safer place for the residents to live in for many years to come.



Volunteers for

Valerie Falconieri

During March, college students across the country participate in spring break. While some students choose to take a break from coursework and college life, many students choose to participate in alternative break programs to engage in impactful community service projects. One option for college students is to participate in the Volunteers for Change (VFC)

Alternative Break program, a program of the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP). Through the program, students are placed at a community host site for either a week or weekend and work on projects identified by the community. The majority of the community host sites that work with the VFC program are located in rural communities and largely consist of town halls, community centers, and nonprofit organizations. Empowering communities one volunteer at a time is the VFC motto, as our community host sites are at the heart of the VFC program. The program has and continues to leave a meaningful impact on college student volunteers as well the communities in which they serve.

The VFC Alternative Break program began under the direction of Ms. Maxine Waller. Originally named Volunteers for Communities, the program had its origins in Ivanhoe, a small, rural town located in southwest Virginia. Ivanhoe was Maxine's home of 30 years and when a local zinc mine closed, she began to organize the residents to form a civic league to address local concerns. In 1987, Maxine was approached by a college asking if Ivanhoe could accommodate a group of volunteers. She eagerly jumped at the opportunity and after a successful week of hard work and community volunteer interaction, she was contacted with similar requests from colleges around the country. Neighboring communities had heard about the Ivanhoe success story and asked what they could do to achieve the same success in their





own area. Maxine soon realized the potential impact this program could have on communities across the country.

In 1992, Maxine served on the Board of Directors for the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP) based in Roanoke, Virginia. SERCAP works to improve the quality of life for low-income individuals by promoting affordable water and wastewater facilities, community development, environmental health, and economic self-sufficiency. SERCAP operates in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Services that SERCAP . When the program was created, it was intended to help break down stereotypes about rural America and create the roots of long-term solutions to poverty, understanding, and action. The program has helped make a difference in low to moderate income communities across the southeast.

In recent years, the name of the program was changed to offers include a regional department, housing department, and loan fund. The regional department provides support for decentralized wastewater systems and small water systems operations. The housing department provides a variety of housing services, including housing counseling for low-income homeowners and those seeking to become homeowners. The loan program funds water and wastewater system upgrades in addition to new construction, housing, and community development projects for low-income rural communities. SERCAP

recognized the effectiveness of the Volunteers for Communities concept and in 1993 incorporated VFC as a program.

The VFC program has grown to work with dozens of different communities across the southeastern United States. VFC has worked with over thirty different schools and thousands of volunteers over the years. Volunteers For Change (VFC) Alternative Break. SERCAP's VFC program continues to provide year-round opportunities for service-learning experiences. By participating in the program, students are given the opportunity to provide valuable services to communities in need of assistance during traditional school breaks. The VFC program initiates experiences that foster a cultural exchange as well as a deeper understanding of local concerns and social issues through service-learning. Through these experiences, the program aims to motivate students to become actively engaged citizens in their communities. The program offers a cultural immersion experience, giving communities the opportunity to identify projects they need assistance with while facilitating exchanges with student volunteers. The program also offers an academic and career track geared toward student interests and community needs. In the past, this track has focused on topics such as public health, engineering, or early childhood education. Past project examples include housing rehabilitation, painting structures, building ramps or porches, recreational trail maintenance, working in food banks, assisting with community garden maintenance, or leading



interactive programs for the elderly. Additionally, each of the student volunteers who participate in the program make a financial contribution to the community host site as an essential part of the program. The funds received are used for project supplies, lodging, meal expenses, and administrative fees.

Although the program is offered year-round, the spring break season tends to be the most popular. This past March, the VFC Alternative Break program placed 328 student volunteers from 11 colleges and universities with 20 different community host sites in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama. The students worked in community gardens, mentored grade school students in an after-school program, assisted veterans and senior citizens, provided housing rehabilitation, and learned about life in rural America. The students completed approximately 9,840 hours of volunteer service, making an in-kind contribution of \$237,537.60 and financial contributions of over \$49,000, for a total in-kind and cash investment exceeding \$286,537 into the rural communities the students served. Approximately 112 community volunteers worked alongside VFC and the student volunteers to plan and execute this year's service season. The student volunteers and service-learning projects impacted approximately 4,125 individuals across the region. By participating in the VFC Alternative Break program, student volunteers gain hands-on experience in addition to enhancing their teamwork, communication, and collaboration skills. One of the goals of the program is to motivate students to become active, engaged citizens in their communities. Building relationships with the community host site and sharing ideas and stories plays a significant role in the students' lives as well as the community members. Through the VFC Alternative Break program, community host sites work with students determined to make a difference while sharing their culture, stories, history, and skills. Community host sites are offered assistance with project and itinerary development through the VFC program and training through SERCAP's annual Water is Life Conference. The program also has the power to bridge perceived generation gaps through hard work and collaboration and inspire others to make a difference in their communities.

One community host site working with the VFC Alternative Break program is the town of Honaker in rural southwest Virginia. Through the leadership of Mayor C.H. Wallace, the town has hosted student volunteers through the VFC program for 7 years. This past March, 27 students spent approximately 32 hours working on projects affecting around 500 people in the town. Projects included brush removal, painting, cleaning, and sorting food. Around 18 community volunteers helped Mayor Wallace and worked alongside the student volunteers during the week.

Some of the most rewarding projects in the town over the past years that VFC student volunteers have contributed to have included building a ramp for people with disabilities, installing a door and building a porch and steps for elderly people and digging a ditch to install public water in a citizen's home. For Mayor Wallace, working with volunteers through the VFC Alternative Break program has given him a better perspective of people coming from different areas of the country and a positive outlook on the next generation. "Students come with a mission to do whatever the town needs done and there isn't a task they are not willing to tackle," said Wallace. Although weather can sometimes be uncooperative in March, the student volunteers and community members accomplish

a lot together in just one week. Mayor Wallace mentioned that hosting student volunteers brings the community together. "There is a spirit of cooperation while the student volunteers are in town. Clubs and churches who have different goals forget about their differences and work together to accomplish projects and make students feel welcome." The student volunteers and community members often share delicious home-cooked meals, allowing for fruitful conversation and full, happy stomachs.

Another community host site that worked with the VFC Alternative Break program this past year was the Town of Norway located in rural South Carolina. Mayor Ann Johnson helped organize the week of service with the student volunteers during the town's first experience hosting students. The students worked on a variety of projects in the town including, a key project in the Old Willow School which was to clean the auditorium. The Old Willow School is currently used for council meetings and other public meetings, and the town hopes to use the auditorium for future community events such as the town's 125th anniversary celebration. This past March, 8 students spent approximately 27 hours working on projects in the town that affected around 250 people. Around six community volunteers helped to plan the week. Mayor Johnson had a positive experience working with student volunteers. "Would I have done that? Leave my home to go 700-800 miles to help someone. Yes, I would have. It made me feel well to see young adults caring about other people and not thinking about themselves," said Mayor Johnson. As a result of working with the VFC program, Johnson mentioned that the experience opened her eyes to the young adults living in the town of Norway and how they can contribute to the community regularly. She felt the program was energizing and enjoyed the experience of working with volunteers.

In Norway, SC, in addition to the main project of cleaning and preparing the auditorium for future community events, the student volunteers assisted with a SERCAP project to GPS field locate sewer manholes as part of a water and wastewater asset management program funded under a USDA - RCDI grant. Kim Rutledge, a Technical Assistance Provider with SERCAP, worked directly with the students in the town. "Despite the cold March temperatures, the students were enthusiastic to walk the town of Norway to locate manholes utilizing historic system maps." The manholes were often buried and they had to dig to find them. The students located 60 manholes and then painted them and included them in the GPS inventory. "I'm grateful that our youth of today's world considers life outside of their own important enough to volunteer their time to help rural communities throughout America. This would not be possible without programs like Volunteers for Change."

In addition to community service, students are learning valuable life skills while communities are accomplishing projects and gaining new perspectives on today's youth. SERCAP's Volunteers For Change Alternative Break program has impacted numerous individuals and rural communities over the years and continues to influence those involved through cultural exchanges and hands-on community service experiences.

If you're inspired and interested in learning more about how SERCAP's Volunteers For Change (VFC) Alternative Break program can assist in your community or organization, please contact Valerie Falconieri, Special Projects Manager, at vfalconieri@sercap.org or 540-345-1184 ext. 139.

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NUMBER OF
PEOPLE WHO
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VIRGINIA.

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7

WORKING GROUPS
TO BUILD
INITIATIVES &
PROGRAMS TO
HELP SUPPORT
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COMMUNITIES .

BRINGING TOGETHER ECOSYSTEM BUILDERS

RuralRISE is a community of organizations that aims to increase opportunities and prosperity for small and rural communities across the United States. Recognizing that innovation and entrepreneurship are blind to location, RuralRISE seeks to increase the opportunities, increase accessibility, spotlight innovation, entrepreneurial and start-up activities that work in a rural context. For more information about RuralRISE, visit ruralrise.org



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Perspectives on Rural America:

USDA's Anne Hazlett,
National Rural Water
Association's Sam Wade
and RCAP's Nathan
Ohle Talk Rural Water
Infrastructure

Often taken for granted, modern and reliable water infrastructure is essential to quality of life in any community. In rural places, having a working water infrastructure system with capacity for growth is often the difference between a prosperous future and a future of sharp economic challenges.

With more than \$4 billion available for small towns at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for this foundational infrastructure through September 30th, USDA, the Rural Community Assistance partnership (RCAP), and the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) are strengthening their partnership to bring more opportunities for growth and economic development to rural communities through modernized water infrastructure.

“There is a tremendous need for infrastructure development in rural America. From modern utilities to the transportation infrastructure needed to move the many products made and grown in rural America to market. At USDA, our core mission is to be a partner in increasing rural prosperity.



We know that water infrastructure is a foundation for strength and resilience in rural places from east to west, north to south. Put simply, safe, modern and reliable water systems are critical for the health, safety and economic vitality of rural America. And, yet we know that across our country, much of our water infrastructure is old and crumbling or undersized. Under the leadership of Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is laser focused on being a strong partner in maximizing the historic investment that Congress has made in our aging water infrastructure. Working together, we are building new water systems that will create strong communities now and for generations to come.” –Anne Hazlett, Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development

We are a nation of rural and small communities; USDA’s rural initiatives have been the foundation for great advancements in the standard of living in Rural America. The recent Congressional appropriations of historically robust funding levels will provide rural water and wastewater systems the resources to construct, upgrade and expand services to provide safe, reliable and affordable water and sanitation services. These rural infrastructure initiatives have been the engine of economic development and agricultural-related advances in rural communities. The National Rural Water Association is proud to partner with USDA, agencies and other organizations to support the modernization of rural infrastructure, development of a sophisticated rural workforce and creation of rural opportunities, all to further develop rural prosperity.” – Sam Wade, Chief Executive Officer of the National Rural Water Association

“The future of water infrastructure across America will be paramount in maintaining and improving the quality of life in which we have come to expect in the United States, especially in rural communities. Access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and the ability to live and work in our communities are keys to ensuring that communities continue to grow and thrive. In rural America, this is especially true, as the treatment and maintenance of advanced water treatment and sanitation can be tricky. Infrastructure that is sometimes more than fifty years old is now requiring water utilities across the country to address necessary upgrades and plan for the futures of their communities. Partnerships, like ours with USDA, allows the smallest communities across the country to get assistance in making tough decisions on water and wastewater infrastructure and find innovative and sustainable solutions to their growing needs. Tools like GIS mapping allow us to better understand current assets and quickly address infrastructure repairs; training on rate setting and planning for upgrades means that communities can preemptively account for future costs, and the development of guides for borrowing help empower communities to take advantage of resources available to them. RCAP’s partnership with USDA is impacting rural communities in every state across the country, and provides those communities with resilient, reliable water and wastewater systems that will enable job growth and opportunity for decades to come.” – Nathan Ohle, Executive Director of Rural Community Assistance Partnership



RCAP

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March 24-28, 2019

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For any questions,
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reuse reduce

re



This morning I woke up like any other Tuesday morning, where after showering, and getting dressed, and making my bed, I threw on my flip-flops. I headed downstairs to the kitchen where I pulled together the trash, and I gathered the recyclables. Still half asleep, I tossed them into the cans on the side of the house, and I dragged them to the street corner. After waving hello to Mrs. Nelson across the street, I made my way back inside to grab my cup of coffee and to head to work. It was the same Tuesday morning that plays out most weeks. Nothing unusual, nothing I would have thought twice about, except if I had been waking up on a Tuesday in Utuado or Yabucoa just one year earlier my day would have transpired very differently.

On Tuesday, September 19, 2017, Hurricane Maria made landfall across several Caribbean islands, including Puerto Rico. The storm, which was the deadliest and most intense of 2017, left catastrophic damage across Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Of course, electric and water supplies became immediate priorities, yet another looming task in recovery was undoubtedly solid waste and debris management.

Following major disasters like Hurricane Maria, communities have to clamber to address their immediate needs while trying to gradually put together the building blocks required to return to their pre-disaster quality of life. My Tuesday morning routine of merely taking my garbage out was all of a sudden a lot more complicated for millions of Puerto Ricans.

What I fail to understand as I drowsily make my way to the curb once a week is that there are extensive plans and procedures in place to ensure my life and home are trash free, and better yet that my municipality recycles a lot of that waste. Though perhaps my appreciation isn't as high because the sanitation strikes of the 1960s and 1970s are just a bit before my time, the pictures of mountains of garbage lining the streets of Manhattan are good reminders of just how much we take for granted. When you add in the 155-175 mph winds that Maria brought across the Caribbean, a complicated service becomes a near-impossible one. Moreover, the need for just getting stuff thrown away grows expediently. After the 2004 hurricane season, Seminole County, Florida, processed more vegetative debris than they had in total over the entire previous decade.

So how do communities deal with clean-up? Well, as most successful things do, it starts with a plan. Communities work to create solid waste emergency plans that help address both the immediate and the more long-term challenges of disaster recovery. As many community leaders will tell you when facing a natural disaster, if



RCAP & USDA Tackle Solid Waste

RCAP manages a U.S. Department of Agriculture's Solid Waste Management Program to help reduce or eliminate pollution of water resources and a community's environment through technical assistance and training to improve the planning and management of solid waste sites.

Program activities include:

- evaluating current landfill conditions to identify threats to water resources,
- providing technical assistance or training to enhance the operation and maintenance of active landfills,
- provide technical assistance or training to help communities reduce the amount of solid waste coming into a landfill, and
- providing technical assistance or training to prepare for closure and future use of landfills.

To learn more, visit rcap.org.

nothing else, "it's a place to start." Puerto Rico's Solid Waste Authority estimates that Hurricane Maria created 6.2 million cubic yards of waste and debris. Without a plan, it's an insurmountable task, particularly on an island. Where does it go? What about the bugs it attracts? And the water it could contaminate? Quickly, what seems like just my Tuesday morning chore, is a substantial

public health risk for over 3.3 million people!

Alas, groups like RCAP's northeast region, RCAP Solutions, are working to help communities like those in Puerto Rico recover and prepare for disasters. On August 30, 2018, over one hundred representatives from across the island came together in Puerto Rico for a Taller Para El Manejo De Desperdicios Sólidos Antes Durante Y Después De Un Desastre (Workshop on Solid Waste Management Before, During and After a Disaster) training.

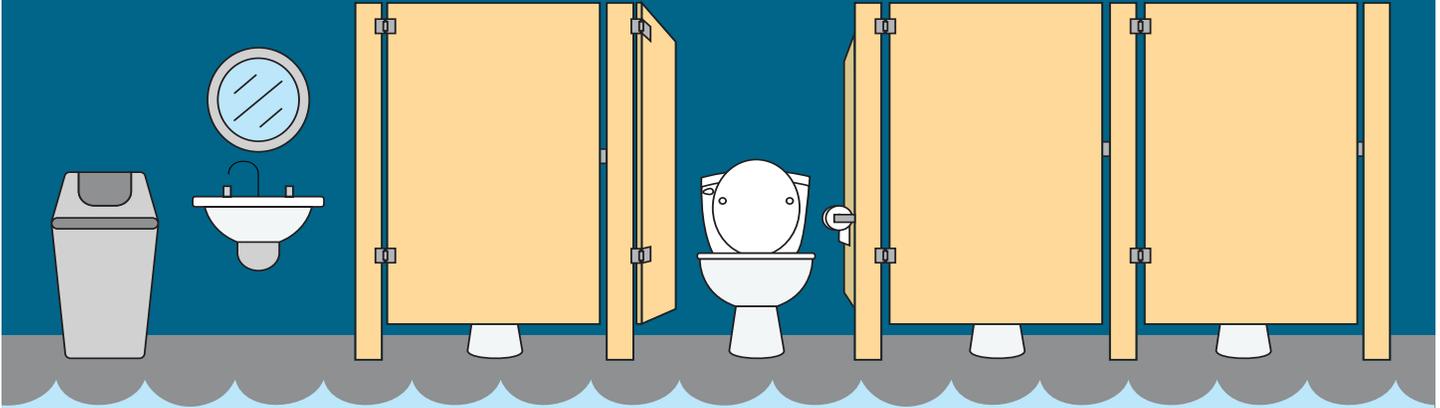
As storms like Maria seem to be occurring more and more frequently and with even more intensity, these activities help communities prepare, put the public at ease, at least a little, and ultimately ensure the public health of our neighbors and friends. Because when it can be just your mindless Tuesday morning task, it means someone worked hard to make it so.



Communities that participated in the August 30th training

BE SEPTICSMART

PROTECT YOUR PIPES



DO FLUSH

The following can be flushed down the toilet.



Toilet paper



Human waste

DO NOT FLUSH

The following cannot be flushed down the toilet as they can clog pipes and/or damage septic systems.



Paper towels



Cigarette butts



Disposable diapers



Wipes
(Baby or flushable)



Feminine hygiene
products



Plastics



Medications



Cotton
(Cotton swabs or balls)



Dental floss



Toxic Substances

Dispose of these items in the trash.



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830-H-180-02 | August 2018



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Upcoming Events & Trainings

Sponsor	Event	Date
The Association of Public Health Laboratories	Ethical Vigilance: Lessons for Environmental Laboratories and Beyond	October 1, 2018
RCAC (Western RCAP)	Trickling Filters and Rotating Biological Contact Units	October 3, 2018
Innovative Finance Solutions for Environmental Services	New Hampshire - Financial Management for Small Water Systems: Planning for the Next Five Years and Beyond	October 3, 2018
RCAC (Western RCAP)	Basic Financial Management	October 4, 2018
RCAP Solutions (Northeast RCAP)/ Pennsylvania American Water Works Association	Small System Operator Training: Achieve and Maintain Compliance with SDWA	October 10, 2018
American Water Works Association	Environmental Regulatory Overview: Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water act	October 11, 2018
WSOS Community Action (Great Lakes RCAP)	Operators & Owners of Non-Community Systems	October 16, 2018
American Water Works Association	Smart Water Systems: Technological Innovations & Analytics	October 17, 2018
Communities Unlimited (Southern RCAP)	Water & Wastewater Operator Training	October 17, 2018
RCAC (Western RCAP)	Rural and Small Systems Sustainable Utility Workshop	October 23, 2018
American Water Works Association	Developing a Water Main Condition Assessment Program	October 24, 2018
Midwest Assistance Program (Midwestern RCAP)	Backflow Training	October 25, 2018
American Water Works Association	Potable Reuse Treatment Strategies and Considerations	November 7, 2018

This publication does not include all available event and training opportunities. For a complete list, visit wateroperator.org



A Farewell Message to My Friends at RCAP

At the end of July of this year, I retired after over fifteen years in the RCAP network – more than a third of my professional career. It started in the spring of 2003 when I left consulting engineering for the challenging

and rewarding work of a Technical Assistance Provider at RCAC. I soon learned that engineering was just a fraction of what small, rural communities and tribes really need in their efforts to get safe drinking water and clean wastewater. This led me to seek advice and guidance from my co-workers on how to do things like rate studies, income surveys, and adult education. In my opinion, the ability to draw on the depth of knowledge in the RCAP network is its greatest strength. This knowledge exists because The Network is made up of people with many skill sets that are dedicated to this work and are given the opportunity to work intensely with communities.

As I sort through my project files, I am reminded of many communities that made this job worthwhile. There was the HOA in the mountains of Colorado that had a brand-new water system that didn't meet their needs and preferences. We were able to run some flow tests and show the engineer that there were some places where the design could be improved. He redesigned the system at no cost to the community, and they were able to cover the equipment costs with their existing funding. Then there was the town on the eastern plains of Colorado that had made some bad choices with the financing of their water and wastewater systems and ended up in receivership. We were able to work with other funders to restructure their debt, their rates, and their management, bringing the systems to a sound financial footing. Another section of those project files covers my work with tribal water and wastewater systems in Arizona, Nevada, and California. That work was made more comfortable and more enjoyable because it was done with the Tribal Circuit Riders at RCAC and was built on their strong relationships with the tribes.

Water and wastewater operator training became a big part of my time at RCAP. All I can say is that I learned more about regulations, board functions, treatment technologies, and adult education from developing and delivering these trainings than I ever imagined possible.

The final three years of my time in the RCAP network were spent at the national office working mainly with an EPA-funded Center for Innovation in Small Drinking Water Systems. My role at the center was to help increase the chances that an innovative drinking water treatment technology was successfully implemented by working with small communities to increase their capacity to choose, operate, and maintain the technologies, and working with the university researchers to make their technologies applicable to the real world.

All and all it's been a good run. I've made a lot of friends, met some great people, learned lots of interesting stuff, brought in a few grant dollars, and hopefully helped some communities. I guess the best way to sum it up is that when asked what I did for a living, I was able to say "I help rural communities and tribes get safe drinking water and clean wastewater infrastructure." Their response was always the same – something like "wow, that's fantastic."

It's been a pleasure working with all of you. Happy trails, and stay in touch.

-Bill Hogrewe, RCAP Director of Engineering Services

Rural Community Assistance Partnership

*A non-profit network reaching rural and small communities in all fifty states to improve quality of life by starting at the **tap**.*



Puerto Rico and USVI
(Northeast RCAP)

Western RCAP

Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
3120 Freeboard Drive, Suite 201
West Sacramento, CA 95691
(916) 447-2854
www.rcac.org

Midwest RCAP

Midwest Assistance Program (MAP)
303 N. Market St., Suite 2
Maryville, MO 64468
(660) 562-2575
www.map-inc.org

Southern RCAP

Communities Unlimited
3 East Colt Square Drive
Fayetteville, AR 72703
(479) 443-2700
www.communitiessu.org

Northeast RCAP

RCAP Solutions
205 School Street
Gardner, MA 01440
(800) 488-1969
www.rcapsolutions.org

Great Lakes RCAP

WSOS Community Action Commission
P.O. Box 590
219 S. Front St., 2nd Floor
Fremont, OH 43420
(800) 775-9767
www.glracap.org

Southeast RCAP

Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)
347 Campbell Ave. SW
Roanoke, VA 24016
(866) 928-3731
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