

EXPANDING IMPACT FOR RURAL QUALITY OF LIFE

Rural Community Assistance Partnership



Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)®

INTRODUCTION

I am often asked why I do this work, and it comes down to three simple words...Impact, Opportunity and Inspiration. The impact being made by the more than 200 team members across the country, working with thousands of communities every year is incredible. The ability of our network to reach every inch of this country, to provide opportunity, and ensure that the smallest and most rural communities continue to thrive is humbling. The opportunity to expand this work, to assist more rural and tribal communities, and to find new partnerships that leverage our expertise and resources continue to drive our work. The inspiration I get every time I set foot in a community and hear from local leaders about the impact of our collaborative work gives me goosebumps and drives home the incredible power of our network.

For more than 46 years, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)[®] Network has been committed to helping small, rural, and tribal communities improve quality of life. The RCAP Network was started with the premise of facilitating access to safe drinking water and sanitary wastewater for all rural communities, and that work continues today. Throughout our history, we have served communities where they are, often starting a conversation around water access. Water is a critical issue for communities of all sizes.

Water connects every community...

It also connects each community with opportunity.

Without access to safe drinking water, no family will want to stay in a community, and without access to sanitary wastewater services,

no company will want to grow or expand in a community.

The past year built on RCAP's strong foundation of service and pursued new paths to continue to meet and even exceed rural community expectations. Our network has honed our expertise and found new ways to apply it, which we will explore in this report on the 2019 fiscal year.

We have the unique honor of serving rural communities in all 50 states, on tribal lands, and in the U.S. territories including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The strength of our work is in our people and our partnerships – with communities and partners, we fortify long-held relationships built on trust. We are committed to lifting up a diverse array of rural voices and building capacity through technical assistance and training. Our collective convening power, advocacy and research continues to address the challenges and illuminate the opportunities of the American rural experience.

RCAP provides the assistance described in this report through public, private and philanthropic partnerships. RCAP would like to acknowledge and thank the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration and many philanthropic and private funders for their partnership. Without the support of our partners, the successes you will read about here could not happen.



—Nathan Ohle, CEO

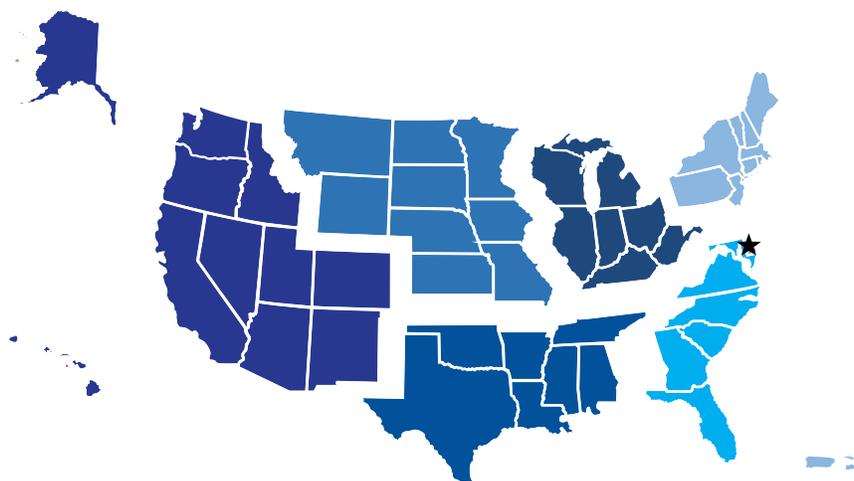


Credit (Above): Bud Mason, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (GLCAP). Credit (Right): RCAP

About the RCAP Network

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)[®] is a national network of non-profit partners serving rural and small communities in all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The RCAP Network provides technical assistance, training and resources to support rural communities in water, wastewater, solid waste, economic development, and general improvement in quality of life.

The RCAP Network partners receive other federal, state and regional funding as well. This report reviews impact enabled by national, shared funding sources. Opinions, findings, conclusions or ideas expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of RCAP, Inc., its affiliates, officers, USDA, EPA or other funders.



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 Roanoke, VA 24016
 (866) 928-3731
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IMPACT FOR RURAL QUALITY OF LIFE

In Fiscal Year 2019, the RCAP network served:

Approximately
2,000
COMMUNITIES

in all 50 states, on tribal lands,
in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin
Islands, American Samoa, and the
Northern Mariana Islands

3.2M+
rural residents

1.2M+
households

Serving diverse populations:



More than 1 million

residents in communities assisted, or 33 percent of the total, were people of color

7 percent of residents

served were American Indian or Alaska Native

6 percent of projects and 12 percent

of trainings served tribal communities

Helping those who need it most:

28%

28 percent of residents served by projects and trainings live below the poverty line. By comparison, the U.S. poverty rate in 2018 was 12 percent.

\$36,560

Average Median Household Income (MHI) in communities served was approximately \$36,560. This is less than two-thirds of the national MHI in the United States in 2018.

30%

The RCAP Network provided technical assistance in nearly 30 percent of designated Persistent Poverty Counties in the United States.

1/3

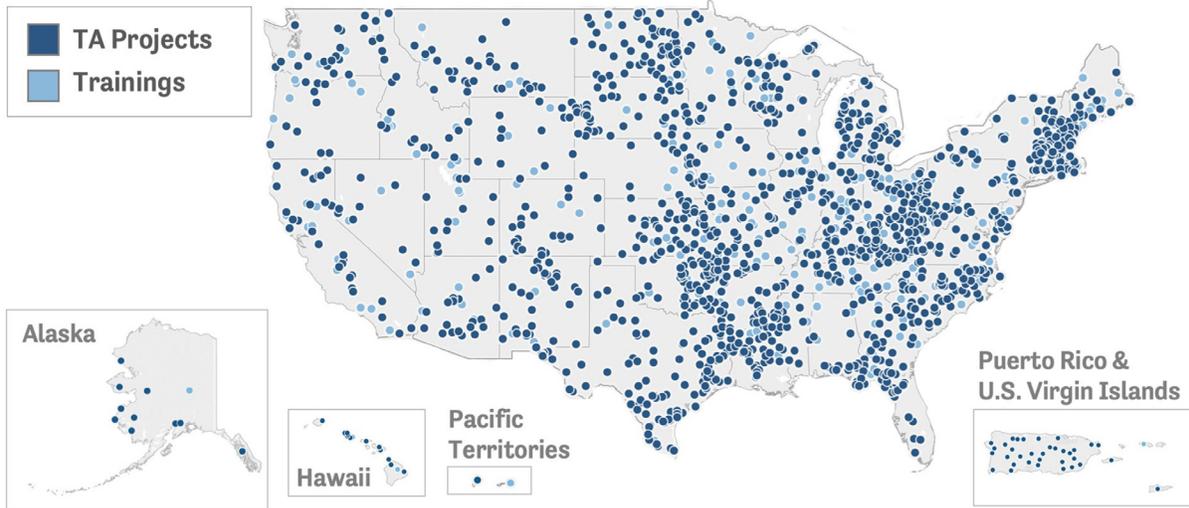
More than one-third of the RCAP Network's technical assistance projects occurred in zip codes in which Qualified Opportunity Zones are located.

84%

More than 84 percent of projects served communities with 3,300 residents or fewer.

1,942

Average size of communities served: 1,942



The RCAP network provided technical assistance (TA) through **1,954 projects** in FY19

505 trainings served more than **3,000 systems**, reaching more than **9,000 attendees**

In addition, **330 RCAP well assessments** served individual households, helping homeowners understand how to protect their groundwater source



FUNDS LEVERAGED TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY PROJECTS

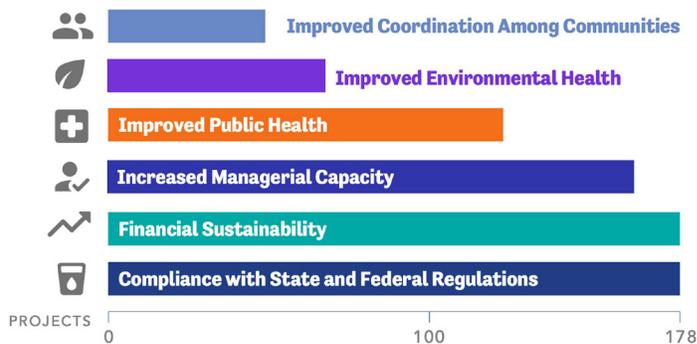
RCAP helped more than **89** distinct rural communities in **21** states and Puerto Rico leverage approximately **\$180.8M** in infrastructure funding

Grants comprised **59** percent of leveraged funds, and loans made up **41** percent of awards RCAP helped communities secure to develop and update infrastructure

Types of Projects RCAP Advances



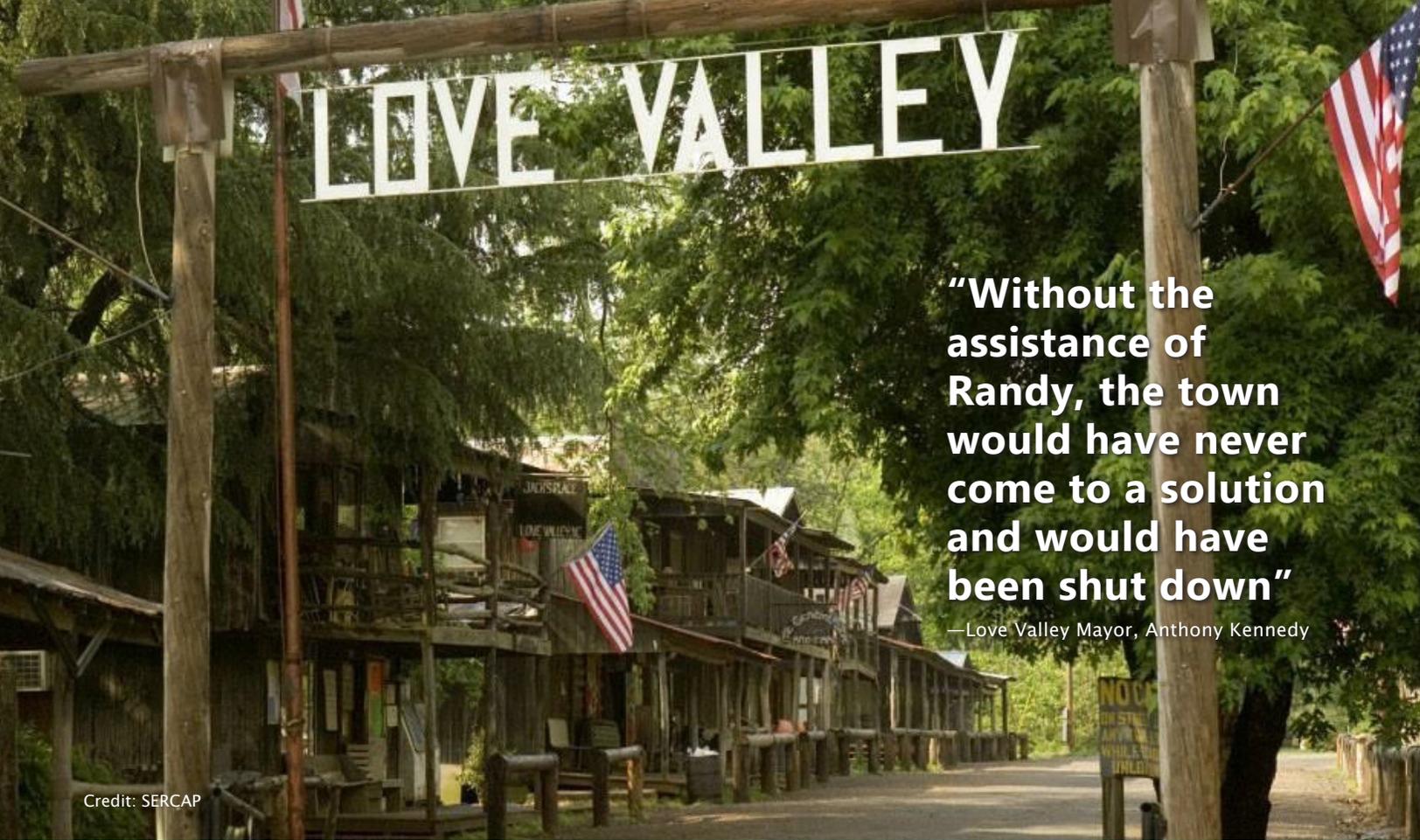
Outcomes Achieved Through Completed Projects



Types of Assistance Delivered*



*RCAP Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) often deploy more than one assistance type in a community based on identified need.



Credit: SERCAP

“Without the assistance of Randy, the town would have never come to a solution and would have been shut down”

—Love Valley Mayor, Anthony Kennedy

RCAP Assistance Helps **SAVE A LABOR OF LOVE**



SERCAP's Randy Welch and Town Councilmember Tori Barker shared the Love Valley story with Congressional representatives in 2019. Credit: Randy Welch

During the summer months and on weekends, hundreds of visitors join the 105 permanent residents of Love Valley, North Carolina. Nestled in the northwestern part of the state, Love Valley began in the 1950s as a vision of its founder to create a community styled after Hollywood western films.

Being a vacation destination creates wastewater treatment challenges for such a small community. By late 2017, the community had been illegally discharging wastewater for three years. Community leaders struggled to find a solution and soon faced a state directive to immediately stop wastewater treatment. Residents began moving out and shutting down their businesses.

The community sought help from the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program (SERCAP), the Southeast RCAP, and Technical Assistance Provider Randy Welch, who immediately went to work mediating discussions between state agencies and town leadership.

SERCAP guided the town board – including council member Tori Barker, granddaughter of the town founder – through the process of selecting an engineering firm so they could design a temporary solution.

Love Valley was able to immediately stop the illegal discharge that posed an environmental and public health threat in the local mountainous, heavily wooded terrain that feeds into a river basin. They instituted a temporary pump-and-haul treatment regime and installed a holding tank that passed inspection, resulting in the town regaining its operating permit.

“Without the assistance of Randy, the town would have been shut down,” said Love Valley Mayor, Anthony Kennedy.

With the immediate crisis averted, SERCAP is now committed to working with Love Valley to find innovative long-term solutions that will allow the community to thrive and continue to capture the hearts of vacationers and residents alike.



Deb Patton, RCAC, Arizona



Art Astarita, RCAP Solutions, Maine



Gloria Gentry, SERCAP, North Carolina



Brian Day, MAP, North Dakota



Gaylene Riley, Communities Unlimited, Oklahoma



Wesley Hoem, GLCAP, Wisconsin

RCAP'S GREATEST ASSET: IT'S PEOPLE

To better tell the story of those who make up the RCAP Network, RCAP launched *Straight From the TAP®* in October 2018. RCAP has highlighted more than 50 Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) since the initiative's inception. RCAP believes most of its work starts at the tap and with the TAP, whether it's providing technical, managerial, or financial assistance. It is imperative to introduce those working in rural communities and tribal lands to a broader audience.

One example of the exemplary and talented individuals comprising the RCAP Network is Deb Patton, a 10-plus-year RCAC Rural Development Specialist who worked in Arizona communities, especially on tribal lands, before her recent retirement. When asked about her favorite part about working with RCAC and the RCAP Network, Deb responded: "The idea of growing up in rural America, then returning to rural America, helped me to be a better skilled and understanding employee for RCAC. Additionally, I enjoyed the fact that I was trusted to work in an environment where my skills were used to help rural water and wastewater systems, with the assistance from other RCAC'ers if needed!"

Other invaluable individuals in the RCAP Network, pictured above, had the following to say:

Art Astarita, who has been with RCAP Solutions for 21 years, said "I continue to be in awe of the network's ability to apply technical

talent in chemistry, biology, engineering and finance."

Gloria Gentry, who previously worked as a town clerk for a small municipality before coming to RCAP, said, "After seeing first-hand how water and sewer issues affect small financially strapped communities, I feel fulfilled being able to offer a helping hand through the many services provided by RCAP. Our work is a lifeline to so many struggling and under-served communities and I am proud to be part of this team!"

"My favorite part about working with RCAP is establishing camaraderie with city officials," said Brian Day. He said he enjoys the partnerships created where he is viewed as not just a Technical Assistance Provider, but a confidante and friend.

Gaylene Riley served with USDA-Rural Development for more than 35 years before joining the network and she finds expanding her knowledge of the daily operations of water systems to be incredibly rewarding.

"It is truly a special organization to be a part of and gratifying being able to help rural communities in need," said Wesley Hoem.

Thank you to all of the TAPs highlighted above and across the RCAP Network for all the hard work and dedication you've shown to improve rural quality of life, starting at the tap.

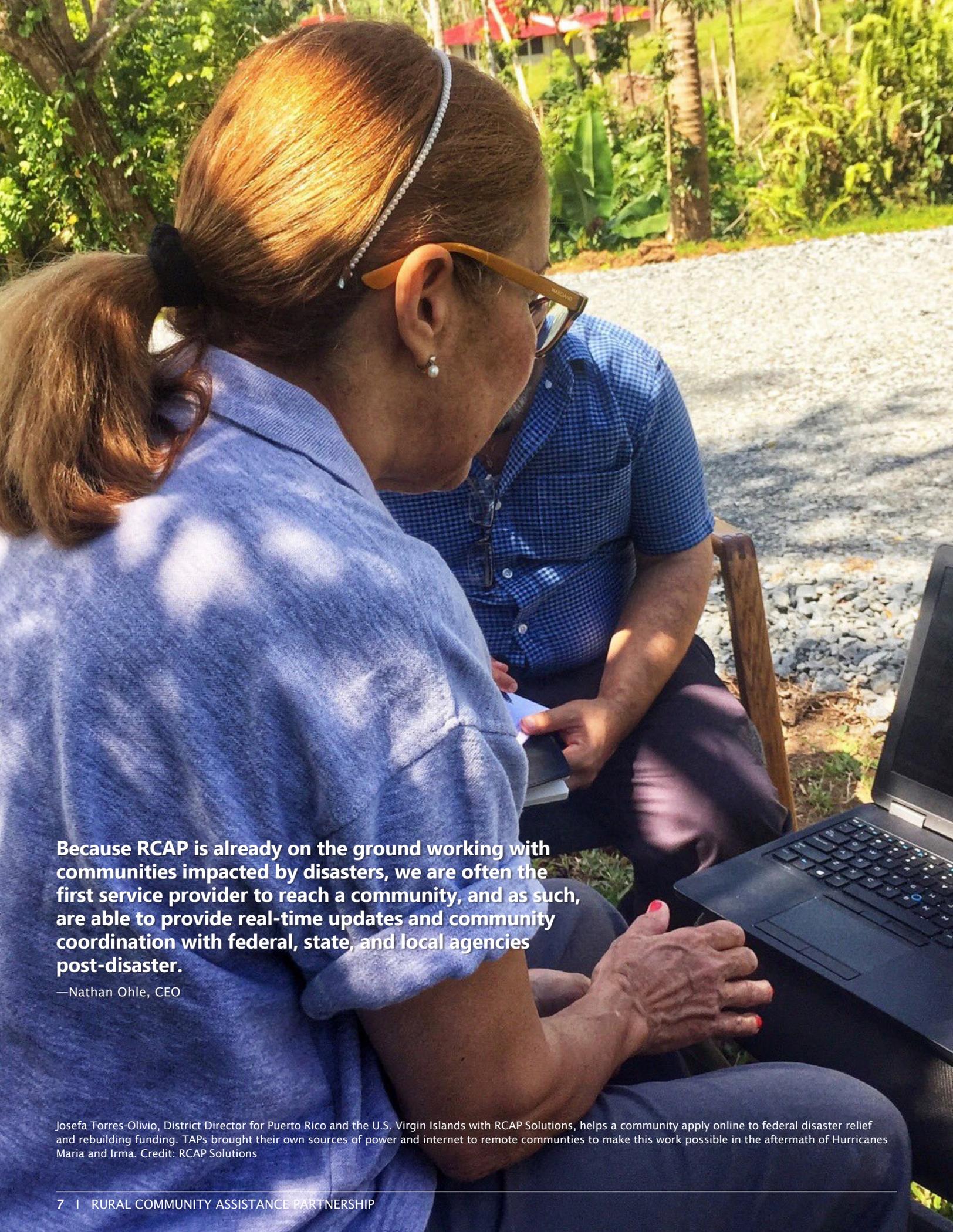
The strength of the RCAP Network is its people – the more than 200 experienced Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) and staff from RCAP regional partners who have developed strong relationships in the rural communities they serve. These TAPs have myriad professional backgrounds, everything from engineers and certified operators to financial management specialists and social scientists. They all share the same characteristic: they live and work in the rural communities they serve.

"My favorite part about working with RCAP is establishing camaraderie with city officials."

—Brian Day

"It is truly a special organization to be a part of and gratifying being able to help rural communities in need."

—Wesley Hoem



Because RCAP is already on the ground working with communities impacted by disasters, we are often the first service provider to reach a community, and as such, are able to provide real-time updates and community coordination with federal, state, and local agencies post-disaster.

—Nathan Ohle, CEO

Josefa Torres-Olivio, District Director for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with RCAP Solutions, helps a community apply online to federal disaster relief and rebuilding funding. TAPs brought their own sources of power and internet to remote communities to make this work possible in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma. Credit: RCAP Solutions

HELPING COMMUNITIES RECOVER AND BUILD RESILIENCY



Top: Communities Unlimited staff helped more than 171 small Texas communities assess damages as quickly as possible after disastrous post-hurricane flooding. Credit: Communities Unlimited. Lower: Barranquitas, a small community in central Puerto Rico, post-hurricane. Credit: RCAP Solutions

As severe weather events continue to be an increasing threat to rural and tribal communities, RCAP's work in assisting communities in their most trying times is vital. From Puerto Rico and Texas rebuilding capacity after major hurricanes, to helping California communities recover from devastating wildfires, and helping Midwest towns bring their systems back online after record flooding, the RCAP Network worked on 333 technical assistance projects focused on emergency and natural disaster recovery and resilience. TAPs helped communities complete more than 113 vulnerability assessments and emergency response plans during the past year.

With this extensive experience, RCAP is compiling lessons learned for small, rural communities impacted by emergencies and natural disasters. The onsite services the RCAP Network offers include but are not limited to:

- Assisting with federal and state disaster funding applications including FEMA disaster and insurance recovery claims.
- Helping communities incorporate sustainability measures to build back more resilient water infrastructure.
- GIS recovery mapping/asset and inventory and management to help systems with longer-term disaster recovery and rebuilding. Because RCAP is already on the ground working with communities impacted by disasters, we are often the first service provider to reach a community, and as such, are able to provide real-time updates and community coordination with federal, state, and local agencies post-disaster.

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ACHIEVING IMPACT, TOGETHER



While RCAP's main strength is its people on the ground in rural communities across the country, a close second is the core belief that we can achieve more together, and that partnerships make the impact more profound. Partnership is in our name, and it's the essence of our organization and its people.

Our six regional partners are critical to the success of our work, and as such, comprise our most important partnership. This key partnership leads to the opportunity to build out collaborations with many organizations across the country.

Our work would not be possible without our funding partners, who ensure that our work continues to expand on the ground in communities in every state and territory. Those funding partners include: **the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Spring Point Partners, CoBank, the Robert Wood Johnson**

Foundation, and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

RCAP participated in collaborative efforts to advance solutions on water and sanitation access, water workforce, source water protection, decentralized wastewater treatment, lead service line replacement, regional collaboration, water in schools, rural innovation, rural economic development, broadband, urban and rural connectivity, and climate adaptation issues and challenges.

RCAP utilized its strong relationships, convening power and expertise to pursue a range of partnership opportunities.

Partnership Highlight:

#Agua4All

The successful Agua4All Program, which was started by RCAC in California in 2014, expanded to Texas where Communities Unlimited, the Southern RCAP, installed water bottle filling stations in three rural low-income schools, ensuring students and teachers had increased access to safe drinking water leading to increased water and decreased sugary beverage consumption.

Partnership Highlight:

Rural Homecoming is a partnership for communities — to reconnect people with their rural hometowns and to help tell stories of what being rural truly means.



RCAP Regional Partners



Thanks to our partners!

American Bankers Association
American Public Works Association
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Water Works Association
Appalachian Regional Commission
Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Association of State Drinking Water Administrators
Bipartisan Policy Center
BlueDrop
Brookings Institute
Center on Rural Innovation
Central Appalachian Network
Chris Long Foundation
CoBank
California State University - Chico
Community Roots
Duke University-Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions
EntreEd
Esri
EveryLibrary
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Farm Credit
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
Federal Reserve Board
Go Forward Pine Bluff
Housing Assistance Council
InBIA
International Economic Development Council
Inter Tribal Council of Arizona
LIGHTS Regional Innovation Network
LOR Foundation
Mississippi State University
National Association of Clean Water Association

National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Regional Councils
National Association of Water Companies
National Center for Resource Development
National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA
National Environmental Health Association
National Governors Association
National Groundwater Association
National League of Cities
Network Kansas
New America
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Pennsylvania State University
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Rural Coalition
Rural Development Initiatives
Rural LISC
Simmons Bank
Small Business Majority
Solid Waste Association of North America
Spring Point Partners
Texas A&M University
The United States Conference of Mayors
The Water Center at UPenn
The Water Research Foundation
United States Chamber of Commerce
United States Department of Agriculture
United States Economic Development Administration
United States Environmental Protection Agency

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign — Illinois State Water Survey and WaterOperator.org
University of Rhode Island
US Water Alliance
Virginia Tech University
Water and Wastewater Equipment Manufacturers Association
Water Environment Federation
Water Foundation
WaterReuse
Water Systems Council

Partnership Highlight



This mobile app is designed to identify areas with low or no connectivity to more accurately reflect broadband accessibility in communities across the country and to help ensure adequate funding for broadband infrastructure is provided in the future. (Powered by a partnership with National Association of Counties (NACo), Rural LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation), the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and Farm Credit.)

Partnership Highlight



The Illinois State Water Survey, founder of the Private Well Class, hosted the second National Private Well Conference, which convened 120 private well professionals including environmental health professionals, cooperative extension educators, federal agencies, state regulators, researchers, laboratories, and groundwater industry professionals from 33 states.



Drinking water treatment plant managers describe how the plant is expanding service to colonias in South Texas. Credit: RCAP

Expanding Water and Wastewater Access in the Colonias

What are colonias? Informal, unincorporated settlements in the United States located close to the Border with Mexico.

In 2015, RCAP conducted the first in-depth needs assessment of colonias, and continues to work on improving access to and affordability of basic services to colonias communities across the southern border. During the past year, RCAP and its partners Communities Unlimited (CU) and the Rural Community Assistance Corporation

(RCAC) worked with USDA to continue to decrease the severity of needs faced in colonias. For the most part, colonias projects involve sustained efforts over many years to implement improvements and address needs, because these communities face such unique challenges.

RCAP's work in colonias in 2019:

- Provided technical assistance to 50 projects in the four-state border region of the United States: California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.
- Assisted five projects that involved multiple colonias partnering to find and implement solutions, continuing RCAP's long-held goal of assisting communities in regional collaboration
- Helped leverage more than \$93.8 million in awarded USDA pre-development and infrastructure dollars to top priority colonias, delivering much needed improvements to these distressed rural areas

Project example

RCAP helped a colonia in Northeast El Paso County, Texas, which had no water service at all and whose residents were hauling water, to access USDA Rural Development funding to establish water service there for the first time.



Credit: Matthew Osborne

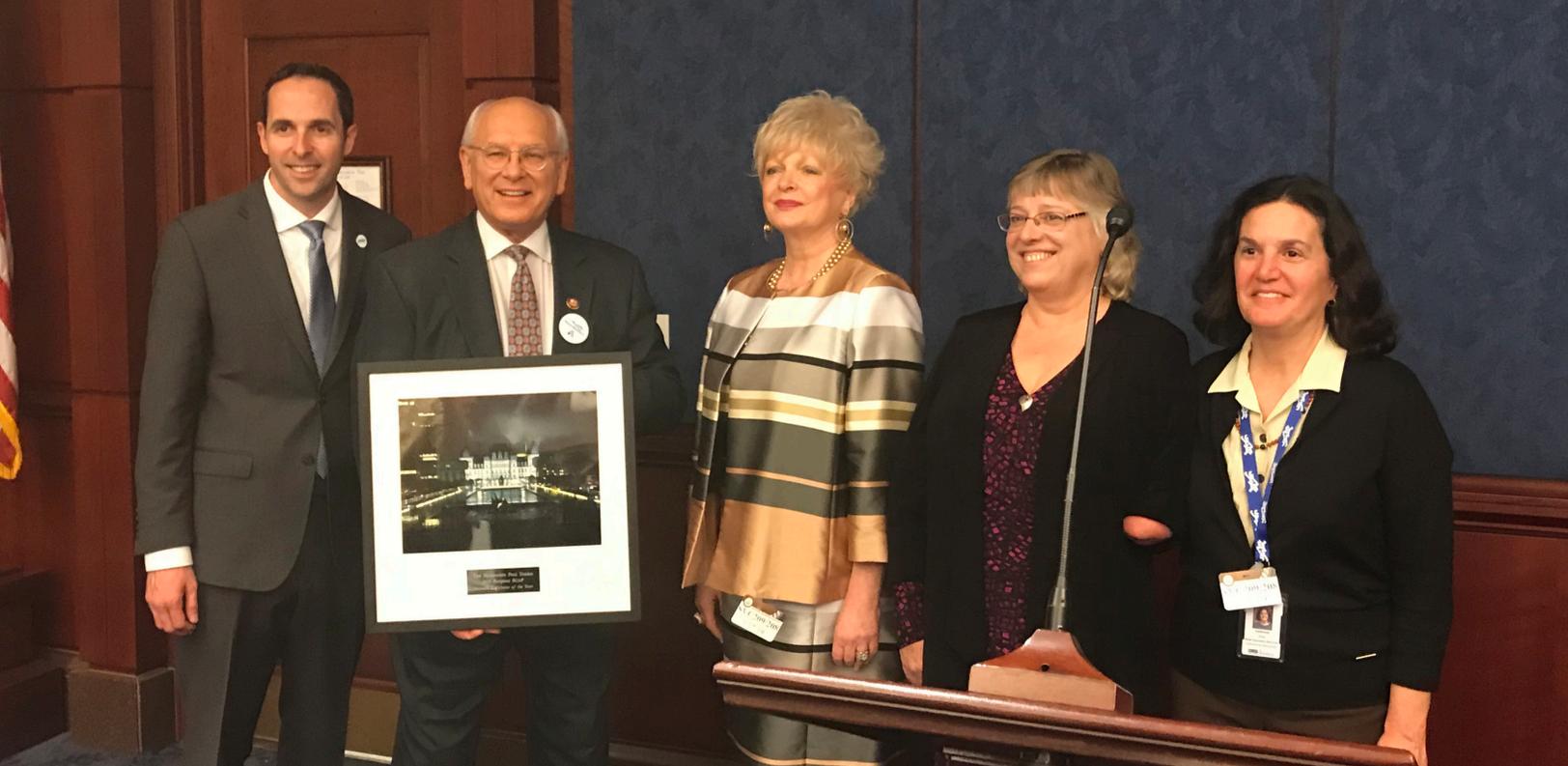
Building on Excellence in Trainings

RCAP has an extensive training program that is designed to help attending communities and individuals obtain increased knowledge and observable change. The RCAP Network's interactive, participant-based trainings build capacity to support sustainable community development. Topics range from technical (water and wastewater compliance, solid waste management, and private well management) to financial and managerial leadership-oriented trainings.

RCAP continues to manage and expand our library of national trainings available and currently has more than 25 training modules. In cooperation with the American Water Works Association (AWWA), RCAP has an additional 19 modules; in FY19, we added new training offerings on cyanotoxins and large building water quality. Additionally, we are expanding the online resources we offer. RCAP is starting to make webinars, elearning, and videos available anytime, anywhere.

In FY19, the RCAP Network delivered **505 trainings** to more than **9,000** board members, operators, utility staff, homeowners and environmental health professionals.

Participants in trainings represented more than **3,000** water and/or wastewater systems.



In March 2019, more than 100 field staff, RCAP board members and rural community members and leaders met in Washington, DC to advocate on behalf of the communities served by the RCAP Network. They met with more than 200 members of Congress representing states and districts in which RCAP is working to educate them about the importance of federal programs for water, wastewater and solid waste infrastructure as well as rural economic development. RCAP Network team members heard from top USDA and U.S. EPA officials, and held a first-ever Capitol Hill special event recognizing RCAP Network Congressional Champions for 2019. RCAP honored U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and U.S. Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY) with awards for their outstanding service, dedication, and tireless advocacy on behalf of RCAP, but more importantly, on behalf of rural communities and small towns across the nation. Credit: RCAP

Growing RCAP's Capacity to Advance Rural Issues



Credit: RCAP

With its on-the-ground experience, the RCAP Network takes seriously its role in identifying and advancing policy solutions to challenges in rural, small and tribal communities across the United States and the U.S. territories.

Despite continuing pressures to reduce spending at the federal level, this past year RCAP was successful in keeping funding at USDA and EPA at or above the previous year's level as

well as new programs created under America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA, P.L. 115-270) being funded for the first time.

RCAP continues to focus advocacy efforts on drinking water/wastewater policy and regulatory issues, including by working with our federal agency partners as they implement critical sections of AWIA. RCAP has provided technical comments, suggestions and review on draft regulations involving

water security, considerations for compliance, State Revolving Fund requirements, and programs implemented or changed by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334).

RCAP looks forward to building on this solid advocacy foundation and has appreciated all the new and existing partnerships that were created and cultivated this year.

KEY POLICY ADVANCEMENT: REGIONALIZATION

In October, RCAP worked with U.S. Senators Duckworth and Braun to introduce the bipartisan “Voluntary Water Partnership for Distressed Communities Act of 2019 (S. 2596)”. This commonsense bill, if enacted into law, would help thousands of drinking water utilities of all sizes provide quality water services to millions of Americans.

The Voluntary Water Partnership for Distressed Communities Act would help enable water systems and local leaders who seek a partnership by:

Preventing a community water system from being levied with a compliance enforcement action for 180 days, so long as the community water system is actively and in good faith working to enter into a partnership.

Requiring that the utilities in the partnership be in compliance with federal and state drinking water standards within three years after the partnership is formed or a date determined by the State or U.S. EPA.

Requiring the Administrator of U.S. EPA to establish incentives to help distressed community water systems who are seeking to partner, including providing technical assistance funding to help facilitate a partnership.

Clarifying that funds from the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds (DWSRF) cannot be withheld with respect to partnerships being entered into.

Creating a safe harbor to ensure community water systems who are seeking a partnership cannot be held liable for civil penalties or fines for violations while forming the partnership.

Defining a partnership as a joint enterprise between community water systems.

RCAP will continue to work with our Capitol Hill partners to advance this important bipartisan legislation in 2020.



Building Coalitions to Support Rural Communities: RCAP focused additional efforts and resources around coalition building with an interest toward a renewed federal infrastructure package for small-town America with robust funding levels for rural and economic development programs.

RCAP has teamed up with the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) to create the **Rural Prosperity Network**. This new network will bring together and organize rural focused groups to work collectively to advocate and voice the broader needs of USDA-Rural Development investments that will increase prosperity for all small and rural communities across the country.

RCAP is a proud partner of the **Rebuild Rural Coalition** led by the Farm Credit. The Coalition is dedicated to advocating for investment in rural America’s infrastructure and understands that rural America’s infrastructure needs are fundamentally different.



Magnifying Rural Voices

RCAP should no longer be the best kept secret for rural communities. The RCAP national office has prioritized articulating the impact of the RCAP Network for rural communities, reaching new audiences through more than **40 presentations** at nationwide conferences and events. As a result, rcap.org saw more than **35k** new users reaching the site, and Twitter followers rose by more than **50 percent** in just 12 months.

RCAP Expands Ability To Facilitate Water and Wastewater System Partnerships

The RCAP Network has been helping to facilitate and implement regional utility partnership solutions for more than a decade, but thanks to a new funding opportunity from Spring Point Partners, the network has recently been able to expand its efforts. In most cases, RCAP acts as a neutral third-party facilitator to provide resources, expertise and guidance to communities as they navigate the challenging but important process of regional collaboration.

Most small utilities are faced with several challenges including aging infrastructure, rising costs, an increase in extreme weather events, more stringent regulations and a shortage of operators, to name a few. Regionalization is a mechanism to create economies of scale and cost and knowledge sharing opportunities that can lessen these burdens. In the cases where regional collaboration is the best option for communities, it can help small systems be



Credit: SERCAP

more sustainable over the long term. Although RCAP has been engaged in this work for many years, we have only been able to meet a fraction of the need, as funding allowed. This new dedicated funding source has allowed the network to hire four new staff, one expert based at RCAP's national office and three on-the-ground practitioners to build out this work across the country with a special focus in select states.

Several Florida water system operators join SERCAP, the Southeastern RCAP, for the inaugural quarterly breakfast to share opportunities, challenges, and best practices. RCAP TAP Tony Dvorak, third from the left, facilitated a great example of regionalization when he realized that two communities were using the wrong size of chlorinator. They were better off swapping equipment, so he brought the communities together and assisted them through that process. He showed them how to rebuild, install, and run the better-fitting piece of equipment. Long-term benefits of this informal type of regionalization can include more efficient plant operations and, hopefully, increased trust and relationship building between the two communities.

Regionalization, by RCAP's definition, is any type of collaboration between multiple utilities which results in mutual benefit. This collaboration can take many forms – from an informal partnership such as a mutual aid agreement in case of an emergency or sharing of heavy equipment, to the more formal such as the formation of a Joint Powers Authority to develop a new water source or a full physical and/or managerial consolidation.

As a result of our partnership with Spring Point Partners, RCAP is:

- Providing on-site technical assistance and training to communities focused on regional collaboration in three states:
 - Florida
 - Illinois
 - Pennsylvania
- Developing an internal network working group to meet monthly in order to exchange ideas, share lessons learned, build skills around regionalization and elevate the results that this dedicated regionalization training and technical assistance support is achieving for rural and small systems
- Conducting two research projects focused on regionalization:
 - One focused on the experience of communities, including governance models, successful approaches, and pitfalls to consider
 - A second focused on how state and federal policy can either hinder or incentivize regional solutions
- Hosting three regional collaboration convenings
 - Springfield, IL – October 2019
 - State College, PA – March 2020
 - Washington, DC – Fall 2020

Increasing Community Capacity

New REDI Cooperative Program Expands Communities' Ability to Retain Wealth Locally



Credit: Ashley Zuelke, RCAP

What is WealthWorks?

The WealthWorks approach is designed to produce and sustain the following outcomes:

- A more self-reliant and robust local economy
- Increased upward mobility overall and through improved livelihoods of lower-income people, firms and places
- Wealth that sticks — because it is locally owned, controlled and reinvested
- New economic drivers in a region
- A shift to an entrepreneurial mindset that sees opportunity, takes risks and supports the creation of jobs through vibrant local businesses

In October 2018, RCAP and a consortium of partners received a first-of-its-kind award for a two-year partnership with the USDA through the Rural Development Innovation Center's Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) initiative. The partnership will help 29 rural

communities create and implement economic development plans – identifying economic opportunities and developing community capacity using the WealthWorks model. The resulting plans and strategies will contribute to more sustainable livelihoods for residents.

Nationwide REDI Projects and Partners

The consortium of partners helping to deliver the WealthWorks model and other community-driven services includes:



National support partners:

Community Strategies Group

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

NADO
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS
RESEARCH FOUNDATION



Expanding WealthWorks Training through the RCAP Network

At this year's RCAP National Training Conference, more than 200 RCAP Network team members were trained on the WealthWorks model and how to use existing relationships to help identify communities that could benefit from this type of direct community assistance. RCAP has been helping communities with leadership development for years and is finding a clear connection between that work and this new focus on economic capacity building.



Credit: RCAP



More than **200 attendees** from **37 states** gathered for **three days** to collaborate with other entrepreneurial leaders across the country in order to seek out practical, scalable and replicable solutions to drive innovation and entrepreneurship in rural communities.

RuralRISE Supports the Rise of Rural Entrepreneurs

In September 2019, rural entrepreneurship support organizations from across the country convened in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, for the second annual RuralRISE Summit, designed to bring together practitioners that support rural entrepreneurship development. The 2019 RuralRISE Summit could not have chosen a better place than Pine Bluff, which has, like many rural communities, experienced population decline and is actively pursuing paths to revitalization.

RuralRISE is not just about the Summit, however. A group of dedicated partners meets monthly to continue to share best practices, learn from policy and thought leaders, and to continue to raise the voice of rural communities striving to drive

innovation through support organizations. Through a speaker series, blog posts, and several issue-area working groups, the RuralRISE community continues to lead on rural entrepreneurship throughout the year.

RCAP and organizing partners including the National Center for Resource Development and the Kauffman Foundation look forward to continuing this impactful gathering. More information can be found at www.ruralrise.org

"Innovation is in the DNA of rural communities, and we are excited to help raise the voice of entrepreneurs in these areas across the country," said RCAP CEO Nathan Ohle when welcoming attendees.



RCAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Keith Ashby,
President**
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**Mike Brownfield,
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Credit: Laura Landes, RCAP

Community Quotes

“Without your help, I don’t know how Calhoun Falls would be able to address some of its problems. I am certain there are many other small communities that have similar problems and need the same type of services we do.”

—Calhoun Falls, South Carolina, Mayor Chris Cowan

“Whenever an issue arises, we know that RCAP is willing and able to assist us with whatever we need. They actually care about our city.”

— Evarts, Kentucky, Wastewater Supervisor Cleo Powers



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