FINDINGS FROM THE RCAP NETWORK NATIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural and Tribal Water and Wastewater Systems

In early May, the RCAP Network surveyed communities to understand the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural and tribal water and wastewater systems. Results are from systems RCAP serves and are not representative of all small systems. These results, however, provide an important snapshot of rural and tribal experiences so policymakers can make informed decisions on how to address these issues during COVID-19 recovery.

About the survey:

- **Number of Responses:** 1,137 respondents
- **Facilities Type:**
  - 43% water
  - 6% wastewater
  - 51% both
- **FACILITIES TYPE:**
  - 43% with 1 or no full-time staff
  - Supplementing with part-time, contract or volunteer staff
  - 94% small systems
  - Serving 10,000 or fewer residents

Has the COVID-19 emergency negatively impacted your system's financial position, or do you anticipate negative impacts?

- Yes: 30%
- Not Sure: 43%
- No: 27%

If current conditions were to continue for a year, small water systems could face a **$3.6 - 5.5B REVENUE LOSS**

**RCAP** was able to estimate for systems providing **water or both** water and wastewater using data for 33 states and Puerto Rico. This impact would be much greater if extrapolated nationally and with systems providing wastewater alone.

**$4,685**

Small system respondent median monthly revenue decrease

Frequent challenges due to financial impact:

- operations and maintenance
- delays/impediments to capital improvement
- paying bills, like electricity
- paying staff
- paying for chemicals

13 percent answered they are collaborating with other utilities or organizations to help fill gaps/resolve any issues

How long will you be able to continue to pay for all system expenses under the current financial circumstances due to COVID-19?

- **Not applicable:** System is presently unable to pay for all system expenses
- **Combined answers:**
  - Less than 12 months
  - 7 to 12 months
  - 2 to 6 months
  - Less than 2 months
- **Don't know:**
  - More than a year
  - Do not want to answer

**31% cannot sustain losses for more than six months of current financial conditions** of those respondents who were able to estimate (**n = 773**)