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

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FINDINGS FROM THE RCAP NETWORK NATIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

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

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FACILITIES TYPE:
- 30% water
- 68% both
- 2% wastewater

FINANCIAL VIABILITY
How long respondents can continue to pay for all system expenses under the current financial circumstances due to COVID-19:

- N/A: Already could not cover all costs
- Less than 2 months
- 2 to 6 months
- 7 to 12 months
- More than a year
- Don’t know/ too early to tell
- Don’t want to answer

20% of all MS respondents cannot sustain losses for more than six months of current financial conditions

CHALLENGES FACED BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL CONDITIONS:
- Paying bills, like electricity
- Paying staff
- Maintaining their system
- Paying for chemicals


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20%

2-3: Average full-time staff size
Many supplement with part-time, contract or volunteer staff

88 respondents

98% of respondents were small systems (n = 85)
≈ 1,492 residents
Average system size of respondent

Has the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted your system’s financial position, or do you anticipate negative impacts?
- 43% : Yes
- 35% : No
- 22% : Not sure

86% of small systems indicated they experienced a decrease in revenues, comparing April 2019 to April 2020 (n = 29)

$5,000
MS small system respondent median monthly revenue decrease (n = 25)

About the survey: 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 the RCAP Network 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.

88 respondents

COMMUNITIES Unlimited

Communities Unlimited, the Southern RCAP, serves seven states in the southern United States, an area with many rural communities, a high minority population, high poverty and food insecurity. Through human connection and ingenuity, combined with cutting-edge technology and expertise, CU reveals the unlimited potential in the people and in the places with which they work. Visit communitiesu.org for more info.

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