

# RURAL matters

2010  
Issue 1/6

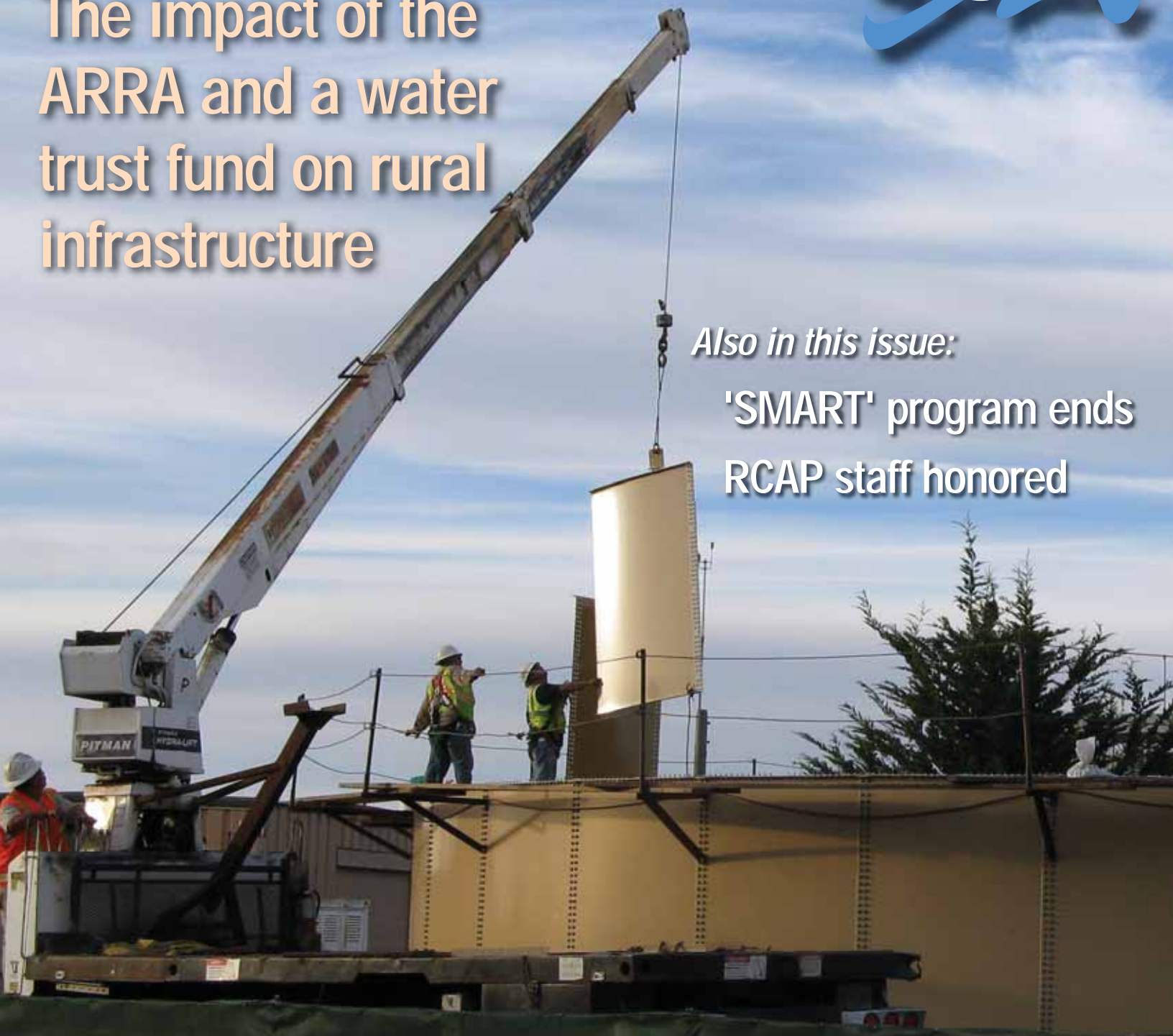
The magazine of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership



The impact of the  
ARRA and a water  
trust fund on rural  
infrastructure

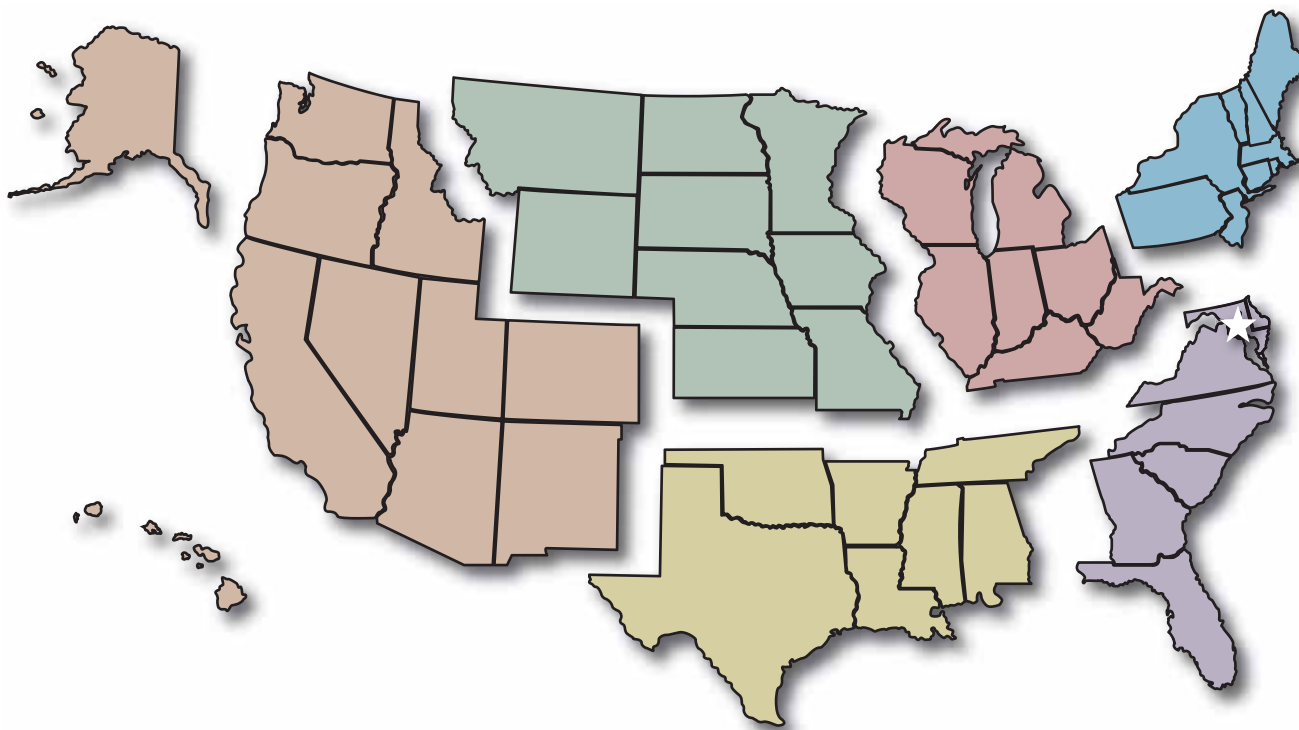
*Also in this issue:*

'SMART' program ends  
RCAP staff honored





# Rural Community Assistance Partnership: A network of six regions and a national office



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# RURAL matters

The magazine of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership

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# Improving the quality of life in rural communities

## RURAL matters

The magazine of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership

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# Director's letter



Robert Stewart  
RCAP Executive Director

Now that this new year (and new decade) is underway, I am happy to announce that *Rural Matters* will be published every two months. Two more issues each year will allow us to bring you additional, timely information on rural development activities and issues. Work also continues on making our new website, [www.rcap.org](http://www.rcap.org), a vibrant means to provide current information concerning RCAP activities as well as programs and developments that impact rural development. I hope you will let us know your suggestions of ways we can improve our communications and outreach, especially what we do through *Rural Matters* and our website.

Looking back on 2009, even though our country has suffered through a historic economic downturn, it would be hard not to say that significant advancements were made to address infrastructure needs, especially those related to water and wastewater utilities. As a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, major new funding was provided for water and wastewater utility infrastructure; approximately \$3.7 billion was made available through USDA Rural Development programs and another \$6 billion through EPA's State Revolving Funds. This additional funding is helping communities, both rural and urban, to better provide services that are crucial to promoting economic development and maintaining public health.

As we all know, much more needs to be done. Congressman Earl Blumenauer, from Oregon's 3rd Congressional District, has for many years been a champion of infrastructure needs and sustainable and "Livable Communities." In this issue you will find information concerning his efforts and his ideas on ways to improve the ability of utilities to fund their infrastructure needs and promote sustainability within communities.

One example of a small community struggling with financing issues is in an article concerning Davenport, Calif. Our Western RCAP, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), has been providing support for this community as it has worked toward addressing a crucial water treatment issue.

I also want to highlight the second part of an article concerning our staff who were honored for their enormous contributions to RCAP. These fine folks are what make RCAP the foremost rural development organization in the United States! ■

# rural developments



## Visit the new RCAP national website

The RCAP national office has launched its newly redesigned website at [www.rcap.org](http://www.rcap.org) and re-established its web presence.

The website went live in late 2009 and provides a new, expanded and modern space for the RCAP national office and regional partners to share information and raise their profiles.

The site features a news blog, which is one of the sections that will be updated most frequently with items of interest from the national office and the water and wastewater world. Visitors can receive blog posts (and other new information) via RSS feeds. Other frequently updated sections will include featured communities and a national calendar of training events.

One of the most useful sections to communities is the area for RCAP's publications and resources. Among RCAP's major resources that are provided in this section is the Security and Emergency Response Planning Toolbox for Small Water and Wastewater Systems, which is available there in its entirety. This section also includes links to many helpful resources produced by other organizations and agencies.

These and other features are being added to the site, which will become more fully operational in the coming months. Another

section that will be added soon is a private area for RCAP staff that will include a bulletin board for staff-only notifications and discussions.

"RCAP's new website is a key way for us to tell the organization's story and become more visible," said RCAP Executive Director Robert Stewart. "We hope the various groups we touch – communities we are working with and may work with in the future, staff, agencies, elected officials – will find the site useful. We also welcome their feedback and input on the site."



## Changes to Rural Matters

With this issue, the first of 2010, *Rural Matters* will be published six times per year. By sending you an issue every other month, we will increase the frequency of communicating with the various audiences that the magazine reaches and the sharing of information among them. We hope this strengthens the learning and connections that take place in the RCAP network. As always, we welcome your feedback and participation in the magazine. Send your comments, ideas for articles and submissions to the *Rural Matters* editor, Stephen Padre, at [spadre@rcap.org](mailto:spadre@rcap.org)

## New website about drinking water issues available to small communities

A new website featuring free articles and educational resources to increase aware-

ness about crucial water and wastewater issues is now available.

The site, located at [www.nesc.wvu.edu/waterwedrink](http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/waterwedrink), is part of "The Water We Drink: Small Community Outreach Campaign," which offers information about maintaining safe, sustainable, and secure water supplies in small and rural communities.



The campaign is a joint effort of RCAP and the National Environmental Services Center (NESC), located at West Virginia University, and is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

RCAP's Director of Training and Technical Services Joy Barrett, Ph.D., says, "The materials present practical, doable steps that local leaders and small water utility board members can take to address day-to-day challenges, such as aging infrastructure, workforce shortages and water pollution, that can threaten local water sources and services. Our main message is that local leadership is essential in protecting and maintaining these critical services, and there are many options for taking action."

Sandra Fallon, NESC training specialist, adds, "The website's articles encourage local leaders to be proactive and work with their water systems to address infrastructure problems and labor shortages by, for example, implementing an asset management program or partnering with local high schools and colleges to introduce students to water industry careers. The educational resources address keeping pharmaceuti-

icals and personal care products out of our waterways by educating residents about proper disposal methods and starting a community-wide prescription drug collection and disposal program.”

The website offers newsletter articles, brochures, a PowerPoint presentation and fact sheets that are available free to download for educational and nonprofit uses, such as reprinting in newsletters or magazines, distributing via e-mail or Internet, or using for training or public presentations. Additional resources will be added throughout the coming year.

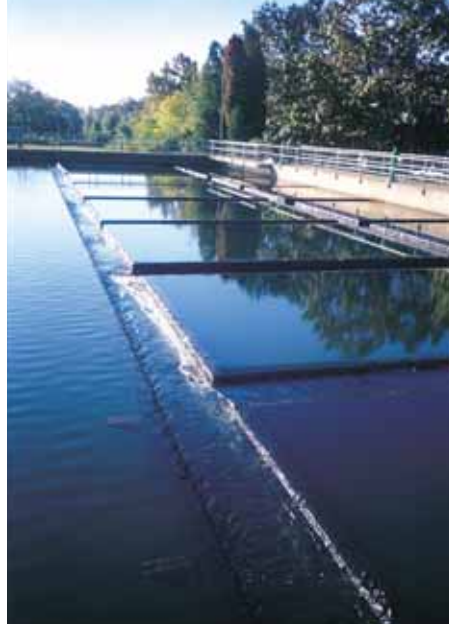
For more information about the campaign or website, contact Sandra Fallon at 800/624-8301, ext. 5582, or at [sfallon@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:sfallon@mail.wvu.edu)

Housed at WVU’s National Research Center for Coal and Energy, NESC is a federally funded program that helps small and rural communities with their water, wastewater, management, and infrastructure resilience challenges. To learn more about NESC, call 800/624-8301 or visit [www.nesc.wvu.edu](http://www.nesc.wvu.edu)



**Fact sheets on WARN available**

Two new fact sheets on WARN – Water/Wastewater Agency Response Networks – are available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The fact sheets are for small water systems and tribal water systems. They provide background on WARN and describe their benefits to these two types of systems.



Several of RCAP’s Safety and Security projects, funded by the Office of Community Services of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, have increasing WARN membership as a key activity. The fact sheets are an ideal resource for accomplishing this goal by assisting with WARN outreach efforts.

The mission of WARN is to provide water systems with expedited access to specialized resources that are needed to respond to and recover from natural and human-caused events that disrupt public and private drinking water and wastewater utilities.

Small Water Systems: A Vital Component of WARN: [www.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/pubs/fs\\_watersecurity\\_warn\\_small\\_systems.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/pubs/fs_watersecurity_warn_small_systems.pdf)

Tribal Water Systems: A Vital Component of WARN: [www.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/pubs/fs\\_watersecurity\\_warn\\_tribal\\_systems.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/pubs/fs_watersecurity_warn_tribal_systems.pdf)

**New website for helping water and wastewater facilities be better energy users**

A new Environmental Protection Agency website for energy efficiency and renewable energy at water and wastewater facilities has been launched as part of the agency’s efforts to promote sustainable infrastructure.

According to the site, drinking water and wastewater systems account for approximately 3 to 4 percent of energy use in the

United States. These utilities are typically the largest energy consumers of municipal governments, accounting for 30 to 40 percent of total energy consumed. Energy as a percentage of operating costs for drinking water systems can also reach as high as 40 percent.

The site includes energy auditing tools, energy efficiency best practices, alternative energy information, funding sources, training resources, and more.

Visit the site at [www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/energyefficiency.htm](http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/energyefficiency.htm)



**EPA releases final specification for WaterSense new homes to help homeowners increase water efficiency and save on utility bills**

WASHINGTON (EPA)—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released its final WaterSense single-family new homes specification today, creating the first national, voluntary, water-efficiency specification for an entire new home.

“Home builders can now partner with EPA and earn the WaterSense label for their newly built homes, helping to create livable communities and quality homes that are easy to maintain,” said Peter S. Silva, assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Water. “These homes will save homeowners as much as \$200 a year on utility bills compared to their current homes.”

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EPA worked with hundreds of stakeholders over the past three years to develop this specification, which was designed to complement existing green building programs. WaterSense-labeled new homes, which will be 20 percent more efficient than typical new homes, must be independently inspected and certified by an EPA-licensed certification provider to meet the WaterSense criteria for water efficiency and performance.

The new homes will feature WaterSense-labeled plumbing fixtures, Energy Star-qualified appliances (if installed), water-efficient landscaping, and hot-water delivery systems that deliver hot water faster, so homeowners don't waste water—or energy—waiting at the tap.

By investing in WaterSense-labeled homes, American home buyers can reduce their water usage by more than 10,000 gallons per year—enough to fill a backyard swimming pool—and save enough energy annually to power a television for four years.

If the approximately 1.27 million new homes built in the United States each year were WaterSense-labeled, more than 12 billion gallons of water would be saved.

With this announcement, EPA is inviting home builders to join the WaterSense program and commit to building water-efficient new homes.

WaterSense, a partnership program sponsored by EPA, seeks to protect the future of our nation's water supply by offering people simple ways to use less water.

More information on WaterSense-labeled new homes: [www.epa.gov/watersense/spaces/new\\_homes.html](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/spaces/new_homes.html)

To see a video message about the WaterSense new homes specification: [www.epa.gov/multimedia/playercontents/video/watersense/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/multimedia/playercontents/video/watersense/index.html)



### **EPA on Facebook**

EPA's Office of Water launched its "Water Is Worth It" page on Facebook in December 2009. The page on the popular social networking site on the web is designed to provide a public forum to share information, encourage discussion, and raise awareness about the value of water and water-related resources.

EPA will be posting information and discussion topics regularly, which Facebook users can have delivered to their virtual door by becoming a "fan" of the page. The EPA encourages visitors to post and interact with the discussion and learning about our nation's water and water infrastructure.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Washington-DC/EPA-Water-Is-Worth-It/175423483336?ref=mf>  
(or search for "Water Is Worth It")



## **WaterISAC**

**Water Security Network**

### **EPA offers security and emergency management resources to utilities**

Information on infrastructure protection and recovery from all hazards is vital to utilities. To assist utilities with access to this information, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and WaterISAC are offering 12 months of free access to WaterISAC's Pro service. The service is a clearinghouse of security and emergency-management resources. This offer is open to water and

wastewater utilities of all sizes, as well as water associations, state environment and homeland security agencies, and circuit riders.

WaterISAC was established in 2002 as a nonprofit water-sector organization in support of infrastructure protection.

"The WaterISAC team has worked diligently to expand the online portal's products in an effort to boost its relevancy to rural communities," said RCAP's Executive Director Robert Stewart. "By joining the WaterISAC community, RCAP members will enhance their security prowess and have the opportunity to provide input on future WaterISAC products."

Subscribers include utility personnel from general managers to circuit riders and everything in between. State and federal government agencies with responsibilities for water, homeland security and emergency management are also enrolled.

WaterISAC Pro's secure online library contains more than 2,000 white papers, best practices, vulnerability assessment tools, and research reports from the Water Research Foundation and the Water Environment Research Foundation. These resources help utilities prepare for all hazards and develop response and recovery plans. WaterISAC Pro also hosts free webinars on current topics such as lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, insider threats, and the H1N1 pandemic. Upcoming webinar topics include current terrorism threats and the use of social media to communicate with consumers.

"WaterISAC is a rich source of information that my staff uses to support our mission to help protect water infrastructure," said Phil Bastin of BBP Water Corporation in Indiana. "The WaterISAC team is attuned to the needs of rural communities."

To sign up for 12 months of free access to WaterISAC Pro, visit [www.waterisac.org](http://www.waterisac.org) ■





# American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Opening the door to new subsidization policies

By Jeff Hughes



For years to come, communities across the country will remember the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 as the source of funds that enabled them to carry out a much-needed water tower, treatment plant, or sewer line replacement project.

However, the impacts of ARRA on water and wastewater funding go beyond the additional dollars the act provides. ARRA is also fundamentally changing the way funding organizations provide water and wastewater assistance. In particular, the act introduced new features and requirements to the Environmental Protection Agency's State Revolving Fund programs that have been continued in subsequent funding appropriations and that are likely to remain a part of these programs for at least the near future and possibly longer.

Prior to ARRA, the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program was primarily a water and wastewater loan program consisting of state-run community water and wastewater infrastructure banks. Under the requirements of ARRA, these water and wastewater bankers are suddenly transformed into water and wastewater grant-funding agencies and are given new and additional requirements for the types of projects they can and should fund.

ARRA includes provisions that require SRF programs to implement a range of new procedures from requiring materials to be built in America to assuring that a minimum amount of their funds go toward qualified green infrastructure projects. Many of the features of ARRA have been incorporated into the 2010 EPA appropriations bill and the SRF reauthorization bills currently being considered in Congress.

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## RCAP plays a role in project rescued by stimulus funds

By Jean Thompson-Ibbeson, RCAC



Davenport is an unincorporated coastal community of 250 residents located 12 miles north of Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz County, Calif. The town's water source is the San Vicente Creek. During winter storms, due to excessive turbidity, the treatment plant is often unable to produce an adequate amount of potable water and is out of compliance with state and federal standards.

In 2001, the county's sanitation district, which services Davenport, applied for \$1.2 million in grants and loans from the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) for upgrades to the water treatment plant. However, the California Department of Public Health informed the community that, according to the 2000 census, it did not fit the requirement of being a disadvantaged community to get the loan it had applied for and would not have adequate revenue to repay it. Over the following year, Davenport educated its residents, preparing them for a large rate increase to enable the community to qualify for a SRF loan while researching additional grant funding.

The sanitation district completed SRF loan applications in 2004 and 2007 in order to

satisfy the updated requirements. In the meantime, it started issuing notices to Davenport residents to boil their water because newly mandated filtration requirements had taken effect that resulted in treatment technology violations. The district also included the project to upgrade Davenport's water system in the Proposition

50 Integrated Water Resource Management grant application for Santa Cruz County. Under the proposition, Davenport received a \$600,000 grant for its project.

In 2007, the California Department of Public Health asked Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), the Western RCAP, to perform a median household income (MHI) survey of the service area. RCAC's survey determined that Davenport was, in fact, a disadvan-

tagged community, making it eligible for the terms of the original loan it had applied for.

In 2008, it seemed that everything was coming together for the community to get the project underway. Nearly all of its plans were completed, and it was awaiting approval for the remaining funds it needed – \$204,000 in low-interest loans and \$816,000 in grants. The total cost of the project was estimated at \$1.62 million, and construction was expected to begin in 2009.

However, in June 2009, after eight years of trying to get enough funding together, the community's officials received a phone call from the state Department of Public Health informing them that their SRF loan/grant agreement was not completed in time. But, they were told, if they could get their paperwork completed within two weeks, they could be one of the first to receive American and Recovery and Rein-





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## Direct subsidization

During the last year, the rate for a 25-year term revenue bond fluctuated between 5 and 6 percent. Compare this with interest rates of 0 to 3 percent charged by most state SRF programs during the same period, and it is clear that communities borrowing money from the SRF enjoy subsidization.

From the programs' inception, subsidization has been a core feature of the Drinking Water SRF (DWSRF) and Clean Water SRF (CWSRF). Prior to ARRA, the subsidization was distributed primarily through below-market interest rates. Communities signing loan agreements often forget about this "hidden subsidization," even though it often saves them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Safe Drinking Water Act, the legislation guiding subsidization in the DWSRF prior to ARRA, gave states the option of offering disadvantaged communities an even higher level of subsidization through principle forgiveness. According to the 2007 DWSRF annual report, \$300 million in principle forgiveness had been provided to communities through 2007.

ARRA requires that states provide greater subsidies to communities and that they do it in a more direct form than subsidized interest rates. States are required to provide at least 50 percent of the ARRA funds to communities in the form of grants, principle forgiveness or negative interest rates.

The 2010 EPA appropriation bills included direct subsidy provisions similar to the ARRA. Under the appropriations bill, both state Drinking Water and Clean Water SRF programs have to provide communities with direct subsidies of at least 30 percent of the capitalization funds the state receives from EPA. (SRFs are funded by a combination of annual capitalization grants from EPA, mandatory state match-

ing funds, and revolving debt-service payments from past loans.)

While a minimum of direct-subsidy funds is set, states still retain a wide degree of flexibility in how they determine who receives these subsidies. One of the defining characteristics of the SRF program compared to other federally funded water and wastewater programs is the design flexibility afforded to states to customize their programs to meet their state policy goals.

States responded to ARRA subsidy requirements in a variety of ways and are likely to continue to have very different approaches in delivering subsidies. Preliminary analysis of the subsidization approaches used under ARRA provides some basic insight into the subsidization programs communities may see in the future. States are currently evaluating their subsidization approaches under ARRA, and while some states may continue the subsidy approaches under ARRA, many are likely to modify their approaches to reflect lessons learned. At a minimum, analyzing ARRA subsidy programs shows the range of potential subsidy schemes that are possible.

ARRA subsidy approaches fall into a variety of general categories. Some states chose to subsidize all projects equally, either at 50 percent or, in at least a few cases, at even higher rates.

States that varied the amount of subsidies used a range of criteria to determine subsidy rates. Some states, such as Washington, relied on income criteria to determine how much to subsidize a particular project.

Some states used a mixture of criteria in order to integrate specific policy goals into their subsidization scheme. For example, South Carolina used formulas that took into consideration the size of the applicant and a "level of effort" statistic that factored

vestment Act funds in the form of a grant to cover the entire cost of the "shovel-ready" project.

There was pressure to take advantage of this rare and big opportunity, but RCAC was able to assist the community again. It updated the community's reports from its earlier income survey in order to complete its application for the stimulus funds.

The project's engineer and county staff also scrambled and were able to get a funding commitment in early July from the Department of Public Health and awarded the construction contract the next month.

Construction is underway. The project includes an expansion of the water treatment plant with a new membrane filtration system and new storage facility. It is expected to be completed by June 2010.

Those involved are excited.

"I am thrilled that we are on the way to high-quality water for the community of Davenport," said Neal Coonerty, supervisor of the county's district where Davenport is located.

A sixth-grade student at Pacific Elementary School in Davenport said he "was looking forward to drinking out of the water faucet again when playing outside."

*Photos courtesy of Ron Perkins, HDR*

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## Different approaches to subsidization

### According to Income - Washington State

Income Level of Households	Interest Rate	Loan Fee	Loan & Fee Repayment Period
Water system not located in economically distressed county	1%	1%	20 years
Water system located in economically distressed county	At least 50% Principal Forgiveness & 1% interest on loan	1%	20 years
51% of the water system households in the community served by the project are at or below 80% of the county's median income	100% Principal Forgiveness	1%	Loan fee is paid back over 5 years

Source: Washington State DWSRF IUP, [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/final-iup.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/final-iup.pdf)

### According to Community Size - South Carolina

Service Area Population	Principal Forgiveness	Level of Effort
> 100,000	0%	< .90
75,000 - 99,999	5%	.90 - 1.04
50,000 - 74,999	10%	1.05 - 1.14
25,000 - 49,999	15%	1.15 - 1.24
10,000 - 24,999	20%	1.25 - 1.34
< 10,000	25%	> 1.35

Source: South Carolina DWSRF Intended Use Plan, Fiscal Year 2009

### According to Category - Georgia

Fund Type	Fund Share of Total	Available Clean Water Funding	Available Drinking Water Funding
Rural Fund (with 70% principal forgiveness)	30%	\$32,143,600	\$12,939,308
Non-Rural Fund (with 40% principal forgiveness)	50%	\$53,572,666	\$21,565,513
Green Project Fund (with 60% principal forgiveness)	20%	\$16,867,350	\$7,339,850

Source: Georgia DWSRF IUP, [www.gefa.org](http://www.gefa.org)

in the percentage of median household income spent on water. Small communities with higher rates and lower median household incomes were offered much higher rates of subsidization than larger communities with lower existing rates.

Georgia developed a comprehensive program that carefully allocated its subsidies between different categories, providing higher levels of subsidies to support projects in rural areas and to support green projects.

In deciding how to allocate subsidies, states had to make trade-offs. More sophisticated subsidy approaches linked to policy goals typically are harder to administer and require a more detailed vetting and application process. States that took a "shotgun" approach to subsidization may have been able to spend money faster, one of the stated goals of ARRA.

There are many arguments for and against subsidization. Rural communities with high unemployment and increasing infrastructure needs may view these subsidies as the only way they can stay in the water and sewer business. On the other hand, providing subsidies to many communities allows them to avoid charging their customers rates that reflect the true costs of water and wastewater service and ultimately may make the utilities less sustainable.

Given the debate about subsidies, how they are delivered is incredibly important. The key decision now for states will be how they will use this new tool. ■

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*Jeff Hughes is the Director of the Environmental Finance Center at the Univ. of North Carolina. The center is dedicated to enhancing the ability of governments to provide environmental programs and services in fair, effective and financially sustainable ways. For more information, visit [www.efc.unc.edu](http://www.efc.unc.edu)*



# 'SMART' protection of drinking water

*A report  
following  
the end of  
the SMART  
About Water  
program of  
RCAP and  
NESC*

In early 2009, the town of Bluffview, Wisc., northwest of Madison in the south-central part of the state, started to formulate a source water protection plan. Leaders were concerned about an Army ammunition plant that had been situated adjacent to the town since the 1940s and how it might affect drinking water wells in the area. Wastewater lines from the same decade were also considered as possible contamination sources.

To get started on its plan, the town's officials used materials produced by RCAP and the National Environmental Services Center (NESC) in a program called SMART About Water (Strategic Management and Available Resources and Technology).

"I've used the toolkit frequently," said Jeff Little, president of the Bluffview Sanitary District, which serves the town of 650 residents. Little also used the program's invitation letter to send to potential stakeholders to invite them to be on the team considering a plan. "I've used some of the pamphlets for educational purposes. I'm also using parts of the training curriculum because there are some slides in there that are very useful," he added.

Little and Bluffview are some of the hundreds of people and scores of communities that benefited from the program, which ended its 22-month run in late September 2009.

RCAP partnered with NESC, which is housed at West Virginia University, on the program of integrated training and technical assistance, which was funded by a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

NESC and RCAP have had a solid working relationship for many years. RCAP has regularly invited NESC to participate in its U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services projects, and RCAP network staff members have been frequent attendees of various NESC institutes and trainings. RCAP also frequently uses NESC documents, guides and curricula and disseminates them to small systems. The SMART About Water program was a continuation of the tradition of collaboration between NESC and RCAP.

"I really appreciated working with RCAP [in this program]," said Gerald Iwan, Director of NESC. Speaking on Dec. 18, 2009, at EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he presented the program's final report, Iwan estimated that there were 100 people – RCAP and NESC staff – involved in carrying out the program.

The program assisted communities in their efforts to protect drinking water quality, focusing on source water and wellhead protection. It helped communities under-



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stand that untreated wastewater from failing septic and sewer systems is the biggest threat to their water quality.

RCAP's role in the program was an "on-the-ground" force that disseminated information, trained various participants, and provided over-the-shoulder assistance in small communities' efforts to protect their drinking water.

## Results

The program's goal of reaching 245 community water systems that serve fewer than 3,300 people was met.

The program had three strategies: training, technical assistance and transfer of results (communication and producing program resources).



## Training

A national design committee workshop was held to determine the program's audiences and what motivates them, its desired outcomes, and the most effective means of delivering training. Attending the workshop were 49 individuals representing a wide variety of organizations, government agencies and communities.

"A side benefit and something that has outlasted the program itself is that this was a large and diverse group," said David Clark, Director of Environmental Programs for RCAP, who helped coordinate the pro-

gram, "and we've improved our coordination with each other on other efforts because of getting to know each other at that first workshop. The listserv that was developed from that meeting is still in operation."

Elected officials, licensed operators, homeowners and septic system installers/service providers in communities were identified as key audiences to receive training at the design committee workshop.

A training curriculum, toolbox of resources, delivery strategy, and evaluation process were presented at a train-the-trainer program in August 2008 (most of these materials are still available on the program's website at [www.nesc.wvu.edu/smart](http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/smart)). Nine RCAP master trainers were presented with course materials and delivery instructions that were ultimately provided to additional trainers in the six RCAP regions.

"One of the most successful components that we had was the Tool Kit," said Iwan. It was designed to assist small communities in creating their own source water protection plans and most of its parts are available to download for free.

Over the course of the program, RCAP trainers conducted 112 training sessions in 42 states and Puerto Rico. More than 683 small community water systems from all 50 states were represented by nearly 1,500 individuals in these sessions.

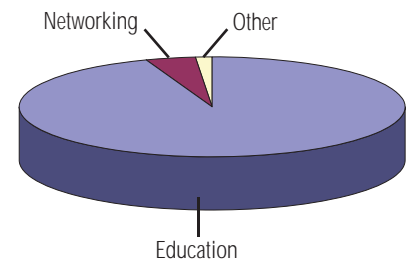
Analyses of the pre- and post-training evaluations showed a statistically significant increase in participants' knowledge on all major source water protection planning elements that were evaluated.

According to Clark, the evaluations also showed that communities not only were

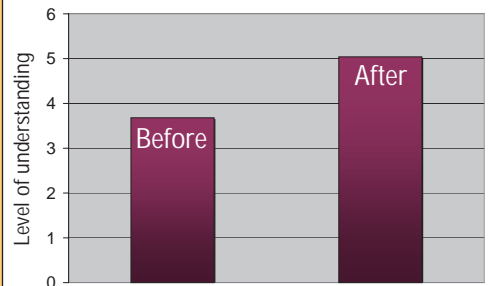
# A glance at the numbers

The SMART About Water training increased participants' knowledge on all major elements of source water protection planning. Tests of participants before and after the training asked some of the questions below, which are shown with the results.

**What do you feel was the most valuable aspect of this training?**

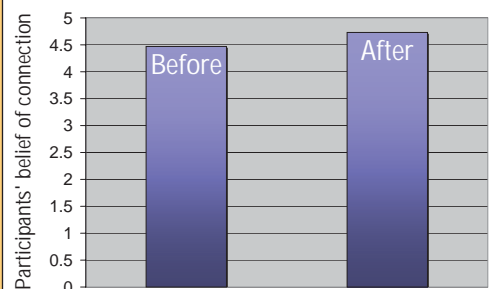


**How much do you think you know about how to design a source water protection plan (average of all participants' answers)?**



Deeper analysis indicated that more than 68 percent of a sample reported learning a significant amount about their systems' source water protection as a result of the training.

**How strong do you believe the connection between source water protection and wastewater treatment is (average of all participants' answers)?**



developing source water protection plans but also had a strong propensity to take action and carry their plans out, making the necessary changes in their communities toward protecting their drinking water. This was one of the overall desired outcomes of the program.

### Technical assistance

RCAP staff provided hands-on technical assistance for preparing wellhead and source water protection plans to 23 communities designated by the program as “Trailblazers.” NESC compiled 18 case studies about these Trailblazer communities. The example of Bluffview, Wisc., was one of these communities.

The case studies show that most Trailblazers consider source water protection a priority for their community and perceive that the biggest benefit of a protection plan is having quality water now and in the future.

“A source water protection plan gives the residents the confidence to drink the water,” said Bluffview’s Jeff Little.

Most Trailblazers used SMART materials when developing their protection plans and said that additional materials, training and technical assistance would help them move forward with implementing their plans.

### Communications and resources

NESC created the website for the program ([www.nesc.wvu.edu/smart](http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/smart)). It offers access to a wealth of information, products, and articles about source water protection planning and wastewater management options, as well as the SMART curriculum materials and case studies of the SMART Trailblazer communities.

When the program was in operation, the site was popular and received more than 300,000 visitors. This was an average of 22,000 visitors each month, and an average of 8,800 SMART materials were downloaded per month. Although the

program has ended, the website is still available, and most of the resources that were produced for the program remain there.

Other ways the program reached out to communities included technical assistance via a toll-free telephone number, educational products, listservs and articles published in magazines.

## Recommendations

According to Iwan, a national, coordinated, collaborative effort to encourage and facilitate source water and wellhead protection planning, such as the SMART About Water program, is an effective strategy for reaching many people in many small communities.



Iwan and Clark recommend continuing initiatives like the program. Doing so would allow the two organizations to provide consistent and focused messages, information, materials, and assistance to targeted audiences nationwide through a full suite of services like those that the program provided during its run.

Iwan noted that the program’s 22-month time frame was limited and said that a longer span would have ensured continuity and achieved the impact such a program strived to attain. “It would be desirable to continue this project, and projects of this type that portend change in public



response and behavior, because of the lag between delivery of knowledge and materials and the demonstration and observation of subsequent actions,” he wrote in the executive summary of the program’s final report.

Iwan and Clark hope that future programs of this type and the support provided for them can be longer-term and continuous rather than compartmentalized and stand-alone so that communities and program partners can maintain continuity of activity, build momentum, measure success, and share and apply lessons learned to achieve even greater impact.

“Projects like this are not one-shot deals,” Iwan said. “We’re trying to change ethics and attitudes, and we don’t do that today and stop that tomorrow. It’s like adopting a child. You can’t bring them along and then drop the support. You have to sustain what you’ve created.” ■

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*Gerald Iwan, Ph.D., Director of the National Environmental Services Center, contributed material to this article.*

*Photos courtesy of NESC.*

Guest  
Editorial

*The case for a water trust fund:*  
Rebuilding America's  
infrastructure  
and protecting  
rural communities

By Rep. Earl Blumenauer



In Dec. 2008, Washington, D.C.-area residents watched in shock as rescue workers airlifted people from vehicles trapped in a massive rush of water caused by a water main rupture in suburban Maryland. More than a dozen people were caught in the deluge, the source of which was a single, corroded pipe that had been improperly installed more than 40 years ago.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, communities around the country suffer from 240,000 water main breaks every year.

The problem plagues both urban and rural areas and large and small communities. Combined with spills from aging and overburdened sewer systems, these infrastructure challenges threaten to roll back the significant improvements we have seen in water quality since the Clean Water Act was passed almost 38 years ago. It is no wonder that the American Society of Civil Engineers has given our nation's water infrastructure a grade of D minus in its recent report card.

As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for more than a decade, I participated in many hearings that drew attention to this issue. In 2003, the Congressional Budget Office released a report suggesting the gap between current spending and projected needs for water was \$11 billion a year. The EPA's most recent estimate is that the gap has increased to \$534 billion over the next 20 years.

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*Robert Stewart, RCAP Executive Director (second from right), joins Rep. Earl Blumenauer at the press conference where he introduced the Water Protection and Reinvestment Act on July 15, 2009.*

*Photo courtesy of Blumenauer's office.*

## Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a leader with a desire to make communities livable



You would not expect a lawmaker who hails from a district that is largely metropolitan to be concerned about issues that affect rural residents. Oregon's 3rd Congressional district, which encompasses most of the city of Portland, is considered only 7 percent rural.

Yet the district's representative in Washington, D.C., Democrat Earl Blumenauer, a lifelong resident of Portland, has made a name for himself as Congress' chief spokesperson for Livable Communities – places where people are safe, healthy and economically secure – regardless of their size, geographic location, demographic composition, or economic base. He is chairman of the Democratic Caucus' Livable Communities Task Force, which,

according to his website, “seeks to identify the ways in which the federal government can affect community livability and improve Americans' quality of life,” including improving public health.

An avid bicyclist, Blumenauer also cares about the environment and how it is affected by transportation. When he was first elected to his position, Blumenauer founded the Congressional Bike Caucus, and visitors to his website are encouraged to “be bike partisan.”

Blumenauer was elected to the Oregon Legislature in 1972, where he served three terms. Starting in 1986, he served for ten years as the Commissioner of Public Works for the Portland City Council. His leadership on innovative accomplishments in transportation, planning, environmental programs and public participation have helped Portland earn a reputation as one of America's most livable cities.

Often sporting his signature bowtie, Blumenauer was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996. During his time on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, he was an advocate for federal policies that addressed transportation alternatives, provided housing choices, supported sustainable economies and improved the environment.

That is money we simply do not have in order to meet vital wastewater and drinking water infrastructure repair needs. In a typical year, Congress provides only about \$2.5 billion. With a growing population, increased regulatory requirements, and new challenges posed by global warming, our water and wastewater infrastructure is in crisis. We are seeing more frequent water main breaks and overflows from sewer systems, and we lose the equivalent of 9,000 Olympic-size swimming pools of water every day to leaky pipes.

The question is how do we repair the leaks and close the dangerous funding gap?

In 2008, I left the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to become a member of the Ways and Means Committee. One of the main reasons I left was to help answer this question about how to finance the rebuilding and renewing of America. Repairing and upgrading water infrastructure is a vital piece of this puzzle.

A federal water trust fund would provide the long-term, sustainable source of revenue we need to ensure economic prosperity and protect the health of people and the environment. This is why I have introduced legislation, the "Water Protection and Reinvestment Act (WPRA)," H.R. 3202, to create such a trust fund, financed broadly by those who contribute to water-quality problems and use water systems.

This legislation will assess small fees on such things as bottled beverages, products disposed of in wastewater, pharmaceuticals, and corporate profits. The trust fund will provide a deficit-neutral, consistent and protected source of revenue to help states and localities replace, repair, and rehabilitate critical drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities.

The Water Protection and Reinvestment Act has broad support from a range of interests, including industry, engineers, contractors, environmentalists, and rural community advocates. I was especially pleased to receive RCAP's support when I introduced the bill.

Without a renewed federal commitment to repair and replace the thousands of miles of pipes that serve our communities, ordinary citizens will be forced to shoulder even more of the burden than they already do – particularly those in rural communities, whose water bills will disproportionately increase.

*With a growing population, increased regulatory requirements, and new challenges posed by global warming, our water and wastewater infrastructure is in crisis.*

American families could see the costs of their water bills skyrocket. A survey by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies projects a steady rise in average residential service charges over the next five years, anticipating the average annual cost for a single-family residence to increase 34 percent from 2008 to 2013. This will be even harder on small communities, which do not have the customer base to support the necessary improvements and upgrades. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which Congress passed in February 2009, provided an important infusion of funding for water infrastructure last year, but it was only a drop in the bucket compared to what will be needed in the coming years.

As Washington searches for more ways to jumpstart our economy, WPRA offers a necessary vehicle for creating hundreds of thousands of local jobs while rebuilding and repairing critical water infrastructure. This \$10 billion annual fund is estimated to create upwards of 270,000 jobs every year in engineering, construction and other industries. If we have trust funds for airports and highways, why can't we create one for the water infrastructure we rely on every single day?

In addition to financing water infrastructure projects through the existing State Revolving Loan Funds, WPRA will create new grant programs to help communities that cannot afford loans. It will also provide funding for organizations like RCAP to provide small water systems with technical, training, management, and financial assistance.

The Water Protection and Reinvestment Act has been referred to four House Committees: Transportation and Infrastructure, Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Science and Technology. It has support from Republican and Democratic members in all regions of the country. I am working with advocates both in and outside Congress to build support for the legislation and to encourage the committees to act quickly to move the bill forward.

Establishing a steady funding source for water infrastructure is a concrete step toward rebuilding the country and setting us on the path to a healthier, more secure future. We can no longer afford to ignore the pipes and systems that go unseen because they are buried in the ground. We should all be working together toward a solution because "out of sight, out of mind" simply doesn't cut it. ■

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*Earl Blumenauer (D) represents Oregon's 3rd District in the northwestern part of the state, which includes most of Portland.*

# RCAP field staff honored with awards for service

## *Profiles of remaining six honorees*

Nine RCAP staff members were honored with awards for exceptional service in their positions on Sept. 16, 2009, at a banquet lunch during RCAP's national conference.

The honorees are staff in four of RCAP's regions. Each was presented with a glass award etched with his/her name and a framed certificate.

This is the first time RCAP has presented awards at the national level. RCAP staff across the entire network were invited to nominate their fellow staff members in five award categories. Technical Assistance Providers and State/Regional Coordinators were eligible. The honorees were chosen by a panel of RCAP board members chaired by ex officio panel member and RCAP Executive Director Robert Stewart.

Stewart said the RCAP board is happy to honor staff members who have continuously demonstrated their ability to provide critically needed technical assistance and training to communities. "Each of these awardees demonstrates an exceptional level of dedication and perseverance to their work and to the communities that they serve."

### **OUTSTANDING ROOKIE AWARD**

This award was given to a staff member who has been with the RCAP program for two years or less but who has made

contributions over and above what would be expected for a new staff member. The recipient has adapted to her job quickly, has made positive suggestions and contributions for program improvement, and has shown outstanding initiative.

#### **Awarded to: Karen Conrad, Operations Management Specialist with Community Resource Group, the Southern RCAP**

"I try to help each client to the best of my ability in whatever area of need they may have," said Conrad, who was completing her second year with RCAP at the time of her award. "I love the fact that I can help communities and rural water systems in many different ways."

"Karen has assisted many communities in Oklahoma with a variety of needs, including billing and accounting issues," said Stewart. "She jumped right into the SMART Program for source water protection, producing needed training and informational materials." Her background as a water operator allows her to bring a comprehensive array of expertise to any project she undertakes.

Conrad said water quality in general is her true passion. "Anything that assists the needy communities and rural water sys-



*Ed. note: Because of space constraints, the profiles of three of the nine staff who were given awards at RCAP's national conference in Sept. 2009 were included in the Fall 2009 issue of Rural Matters. This article features the remaining honorees.*



*Karen Conrad with Robert Stewart, RCAP Executive Director*

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tems in helping them get back into compliance or in some way improving their water quality, which in turn improves their quality of life, is something I greatly enjoy and strive to do each day.”

“Like many other RCAP employees, Karen is energetic, committed and dedicated to improving living conditions for rural communities,” added Stewart.

## RCAP HALL OF FAME

Inductees into RCAP’s new Hall of Fame have made significant positive contributions to RCAP in the course of their work over the years. All are long-term staff members.

Stewart said the three inductees, with their many years of dedicated and productive service, have contributed far more to RCAP and the communities they serve than he could ever recount. “All have proven themselves with years of direct assistance to communities, success in managing programs and staff, service to co-workers, and never-ending dedication to doing whatever is necessary to help rural America.”

Stewart added, “If you ever really want to know what RCAP is all about, just ask one these three outstanding individuals.”

### Inductees:

#### **Joe Dvorak, Regional Director for North and South Dakota and Nebraska with Midwest Assistance Program (MAP), the Midwest RCAP**

“Joe has been a foundation for MAP’s success from the very beginnings of the Midwest RCAP,” said Stewart. “He is a consummate team player and a generator of new ideas while upholding those old (but never out-of-style) ideals of service to low-income, economically challenged rural communities.”

Dvorak said it is a great honor to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.



“I strive to keep all federal and state agencies as well as all state congressional office staff aware of the technical assistance activities of the Midwest Assistance Program, and the RCAP Network in general,” said Dvorak.

Although he is a Regional Director now, Dvorak said he enjoyed being in the field and providing onsite technical assistance to small communities full-time.

“With his vast technical knowledge and extensive field experience earned from a lifetime of dedicated work, Joe is an invaluable resource not only to communities within MAP but also to the many MAP employees to whom he has acted as a manager, trainer, mentor and friend,” added Stewart.

#### **Mark Rounsavall, Director of Community Resource Group, the Southern RCAP**

Rounsavall is known as the “go-to” man by the RCAP national office because, as a long-serving RCAP staff member, he knows what works and what doesn’t.

“I have known Mark for over 20 years, and I have never met anyone with the breadth of experience in providing assistance to rural communities and in understanding the many issues that impact how water utilities are funded, managed and operated that Mark has,” said Stewart.

Rounsavall strives to make sure that RCAP field staff he oversees are productive. “The only thing that we as an organization can offer to small communities and utilities is our people (as a resource for those com-



*Joe Dvorak, above (also at right), and Mark Rounsavall, below, with Robert Stewart*



munities),” he said. “We have to make sure that our staff are productive, that they know what they are doing, and that they have the tools and resources to do the job.”

“I would have to say I would feel most satisfied about making a real difference in the small communities that we are helping and doing something that we have not done before,” he added.

“As a technical assistance provider, manager, trainer of all, grant-writer, loan fund developer, lobbyist, counselor, codirector of the national RCAP program managers’ activities, creator of numerous publications to assist communities and staff in the field, and keeper of RCAP institutional knowledge, Mark has done it all and done it in an exemplary fashion,” added Stewart.

**Deb Martin, Director of WSOS Community Action Commission, the Great Lakes RCAP**

Martin is prolific in her work for RCAP at the national level, a commitment that grows out of her dedication for her work in her region. Her work can be seen in her occasional writing for this magazine, when she makes a presentation at conferences, or when she travels to Capitol Hill to testify before a Congressional committee.

“Deb is the rare individual who not only volunteers for additional assignments, she carries through on each one with a dedication and professionalism that is unmatched,” Stewart said. “She has consistently done an outstanding job of developing relationships with all sectors of the water and wastewater utility industry in

Ohio and has secured an impressive number of grants and contracts that greatly expands WSOS’s ability to assist rural communities.”

“Whatever good I’ve been able to accomplish is really because of all of the great people I have around me,” she said. “It’s very gratifying to work with people who are so dedicated to what they do.”

Martin said she is a perfectionist, so it’s in her nature to never be completely satisfied and to always try to make things a little bit better. She’s most passionate about trying to leave communities better off than they were before RCAP arrived and trying to shape public policy that affects small communities. “In this way, we can have a lasting impact on a much broader level by helping the system work better for all small communities,” she explained.

**OUTSTANDING MENTOR AWARD**

Few jobs are as important, yet often receive as little credit, as teaching and mentoring new Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) and helping them become productive members of the RCAP team. This award was given to a Regional Coordinator who has made a difference in the program through her expert guidance and valuable knowledge and being a nurturing, fostering leader.

**Awarded to: Chris Fierros, Chief Operating Officer of Midwest Assistance Program, the Midwest RCAP**

“Virtually everything about Chris’s work exemplifies the best qualities of a mentor,” Stewart said. “She will always go out of her way to help any MAP staff who ask for advice or assistance. Regardless of how busy she might be with her own work, she takes the time to help others.”



*Deb Martin, above, and Chris Fierros, below (also at left), with Robert Stewart*



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Stewart said Fierros has knowledge and experience coupled with a sincere desire to help every staff member. “Her mentoring includes not just directly related program issues but also those dealing with legislation, congressional liaison, organizational needs and financial management.”

Fierros said she feels “honored and humbled” by this award.

“I strive to do the best job I can, give good advice, and be a team player,” she said. “I always know that there are areas that I can still learn, so I like to listen to others to be able to do my job better.”

She said she gets satisfaction out of knowing that RCAP’s work is helping others out of bad situations. “There are positive outcomes in what we do, and the best part is seeing it happen,” she explained.

barriers, led a program along a road to realize a vision, and brought a plan to fruition. The person has been a true connector and has led programs to success.

***Awarded to: Tommy Ricks, Mississippi State Coordinator for Community Resource Group, the Southern RCAP***

Ricks said he was “surprised and humbled” at receiving this award. He himself had nominated another RCAP staffer for the same award and was worried that he would be called upon to speak about that person at the banquet, assuming his nominee had been chosen to receive the award.

“Tommy is always looking for ways to connect with other groups and professionals in the water industry in an effort to make his work and that of CRG the most effective it can be in assisting rural communities,” said Stewart.

“He is one of those people who always seems to have something new and exciting in the works, so much so that you can’t help but be impressed with his energy and determination,” Stewart added, saying that he could list many initiatives that Tommy has been involved in, from establishing a mandatory training program for board members of water utilities in Mississippi to coordinating CRG’s response to Hurricane Katrina

Ricks gives credit to his RCAP colleagues in Mississippi, whom he said have also earned the award. “Everyone who works on my team in Mississippi puts their heart into the work we do, and it truly is an honor to be surrounded by professionals who love what they do in making a difference,” he said.

The part of his job he enjoys the most is establishing relationships with members of the communities he works with. “I have been blessed to be able to work with some really great unsung heroes who serve as local officials, operators, and other staff of rural community water and wastewater systems,” he said. ■

## THE BILL FRENCH BRIDGE-BUILDER AWARD

This award is named for Bill French, one of RCAP’s founding members who unwaveringly supported the RCAP program, building it into a strong and well-respected agency nationwide.

The award was given to an RCAP staff member who has been successful in building his state RCAP program, whether in reputation and

credibility or in funding. He has advanced his state program to a higher level of operations through new and enhanced relationships with funding and/or primacy agencies or other partners, new services offered to communities, and/or new grants or contracts obtained. This award was given to a recipient who has successfully advanced his state program to a higher level of operations.

The recipient has, in the sense of being a bridge, enabled a program to cross over



*from left to right:  
Bill French, Tommy Ricks  
and Robert Stewart*

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