



May 3, 2021

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
U. S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
U. S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of a diverse coalition representing rural technical assistance providers, associations, and private well professionals, we write in support of an increase in Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations from \$21.7 million to \$35 million for EPA Rural Water Technical Assistance. Through efforts of non-profit organizations, these funds provide technical assistance and training to small systems, communities, and private well owners with the goal of providing clean and safe drinking water in rural America. Rural America has significant challenges, and safe, potable water is an essential need.

- More than 97% of the nation's 156,000 public water systems are small systems, meaning they serve 10,000 or fewer people, mostly in rural areas.
- More than 15 million private wells in the United States provide drinking water to over 47 million people, mostly in rural areas.
- More than a million homes across the country lack adequate plumbing, according to recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The challenges facing rural communities are unique, as they often do not have the financial and technical resources available to them that larger municipalities do, which makes expanded investment in this program so critical.

Included in the request is \$3 million for technical assistance to support private well owners. The requested appropriations language is directly below.

“The Agency is also directed to provide \$3,000,000 for grants to qualified not-for-profit organizations for technical assistance for individual private well owners, with priority given to organizations that currently provide technical and educational assistance to individual private well owners.”

This EPA program has a track record of success. Over the last several years, RCAP and partners have performed 450 well assessments annually across 42 states, and over 2,500 since the program began in 2014. Additionally, through this program, RCAP and partners assisted 4,000 individual owners through phone and email requests in 2020 alone. This program supports a self-paced online class for well owners that averages 1,000 participants a year, and through live online webinars, reaches about 2,500 well owners and water professionals annually.

Providing additional funding to the EPA National Priority on Private Wells program will protect the health and safety of Americans on private wells and in rural communities, and the source water they rely on each day. We look forward to working with your committee throughout the appropriations process to support the unique needs of rural Americans.

Sincerely,

Rural Community Assistance Partnership

Water Systems Council

National Groundwater Association

National Environmental Health Association

University of Illinois