

March 27, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
U. S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
U. S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the undersigned coalition representing rural technical assistance providers, associations, environmental policy organizations, and private well and decentralized wastewater professionals, we respectfully ask for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Decentralized Water Systems Grant program to be fully funded at \$20 million for Fiscal Year 2024.

This USDA program has a track record of success in supporting loans and grants of up to \$15,000 to low-and moderate-income households in rural areas for the use of private water well and decentralized, onsite wastewater system installation, treatment, or upgrades in areas not served by a public utility.

The program received an expanded authorization in the *Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018*, allowing onsite wastewater recycling projects to also qualify for support. By expanding the program, it strengthens existing federal resources that can be used to assist in the financing of private wells, water treatment, and wastewater systems for those rural Americans most in need.

As you know, there are more than 15 million private wells that provide drinking water to over 47 million people. More than a million homes across the country lack adequate plumbing and nearly 200,000 homes lack a sewage system altogether, according to recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Moreover, roughly 85 million Americans depend on decentralized septic systems to treat and manage their wastewater. The challenges facing rural communities are unique, as they often do not have the financial and technical resources available to larger municipalities, which makes expanded investment in this program so critical.

Providing the full funding of \$20 million to the Rural Decentralized Water Systems Grant program will protect the health and safety of Americans on private wells or septic systems, 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,

California Groundwater Association  
Colorado Professionals in Onsite Wastewater  
Communities Unlimited  
Earthjustice  
Florida Groundwater Association  
Florida Onsite Wastewater Association  
Great Lakes Community Action Partnership  
Groundwater Foundation  
Illinois Association of Groundwater Professionals  
Kansas Groundwater Association  
Kansas Small Flows Association  
Kentucky Groundwater Association  
Michigan Ground Water Association  
Michigan Onsite Recycling Association  
Midwest Assistance Program  
Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association  
Minnesota Water Well Association  
Missouri Smallflows Organization  
Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
National Association of Wastewater Technicians  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Ground Water Association  
National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association  
Nebraska On-Site Waste Water Association  
Nebraska Well Drillers Association  
North Dakota Onsite Wastewater Recycling Assoc.  
Ohio Onsite Wastewater Association  
Ohio Water Well Association  
Pennsylvania Groundwater Association  
RCAP Solutions  
Rural Community Assistance Corporation  
Rural Community Assistance Partnership  
SE Rural Community Assistance Partnership  
Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project  
Tennessee Onsite Wastewater  
Texas Onsite Wastewater Association  
Virginia Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association  
Virginia Water Well Association  
Washington Onsite Sewage Association  
Water Quality Association  
Water Systems Council  
Water Well Trust, Inc.  
Wisconsin Onsite Water Recycling Association  
Yankee (New England) Onsite Wastewater Assoc.