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Date 2025-09-29 15:45:27+00:00
Subject 2025 Watershed to Well Newsletter

Greetings!

**Welcome to the 2025 edition of
Watershed to Well!**

Since 1986, RCAP Solutions has been proud to bring this newsletter to our constituents, providing educational resources on important rural, environmental and community issues. As always, we appreciate your feedback on this publication and welcome your input on anything regarding RCAP Solutions and our services.

[For our contact information click here.](#)

[For our list of services and contacts by state click here.](#)

Photo Credit: *"Thumbs Up" taken by Rebekah Novak, Community Specialist, MA, was a photo contest winner at the 2024 national RCAP Conference.*

More information on our Community & Environmental Workshops, including upcoming events, can be [found here](#) on our website.

In addition to direct technical assistance to communities, RCAP Solutions' Community and Environmental Resources (CER) team delivered more than seventy educational workshops for the water, wastewater, and solid waste sectors in the past year to over two thousand participants. These events range from hands-on, in-person trainings to online webinars delivered for a national audience and showcase our staff's expertise on a range of topics. Here are a few highlights!

National webinars delivered through the RCAP network are recorded and available here:

- * [‘Resilience: Capacity Development for Small Water Systems’](#) – Carmen Montanez, 12/17/2024
- * [‘Lessons Learned: Decisions Needed from Community Leaders for Decentralized Wastewater Projects’](#) – John Kiernan, 1/21/2025
- * [‘Hydrant Assessments for Asset Management’](#) – Danielle Desmarais, 4/22/2025
- * [‘Resilience: Capacity Development for Small Systems \(in Spanish\)’](#) – Juan Campos, 5/13/2025

Seven training sessions and presentations were delivered by CER staff at the RCAP National Conference, held in October 2024 in La Vista, Nebraska:

- *

‘Solid Waste Disaster Response’ – Edwin Vasquez

- *

*'Enhancing Customer
Engagement through GIS'* -
Adam Bourque

- *

*'Hydrant Assessments for Asset
Management'* - Danielle
Desmarais

- *

*'Income Surveys: Who, What,
Where, Why, When'* - Erick
Toledo, Laurie Stevens

- *

*'Wastewater
Characterization'* - Carlos
Velazquez-Figueroa

- *

*'WIIN: Reducing Lead in DW
in Schools and Child Care
Facilities'* Brian Scadova-Vose

- *

*'Sludge Dewatering: Need to
Know Concepts for Operator
& TAPs'* - Carlos Velazquez-
Figueroa

Staff delivered two presentations at the
Virtual Water Operator Conference
Sessions, 2/4/25 - 2/6/25:

- * 'Fundamentals of
Cybersecurity' – Caroline
Wilson
- * 'Excel for Compliance' –
Jesse LaVigne

"An Act Protecting Drinking Water Quality in Private Wells" MA Bill Hearing

*MA Senator Jamie Eldridge testifies
before the Joint Committee on
Environment and Natural Resources at
the Massachusetts State House.*

June 3, 2025 marked the arrival of the highly-anticipated hearing for "An Act Protecting Drinking Water Quality in Private Wells" (S.585/H.900), filed by Senator Jamie Eldridge, Representative Natalie Blais, and Representative Meghan Kilcoyne – in front of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources at the Massachusetts State House.

**View the recording of the hearing here
(segment begins at 2:52:58)**



<https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5190>

Our all-star lineup of panelists who testified in support of strengthening private well protections included; Jim Starbard, Regional Director (MA/CT/RI) at RCAP Solutions; Amie Shei, Ph.D., President & CEO at The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts; Bradley Campbell, JD, President at the Conservation Law Foundation; Brita E. Lundberg, MD, CEO & Founder at Lundberg Health Advocates; Chris Mitchell, MS, MBA, Board Member at the Town of Harvard, MA Board of Health; and Brigid Splaine, JD Candidate, at Suffolk University Law School; as well as several private well homeowners and distinguished members of the Coalition for Safe Drinking Water.

We thank the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources for their time, as well as everyone who provided written and oral testimony in support of this bill.

Following the hearing, Senator Jamie Eldridge and RCAP Solutions President & CEO Brian D. Scales co-authored a compelling guest column underscoring the urgent need for legislation to establish minimum water quality standards for private wells across the Commonwealth. Their piece posed a

powerful question: “What might be flowing through the faucets of unsuspecting homeowners?”

[Read the op-ed here.](#)

For more information about this legislation, our private well programming, and the Coalition for Safe Drinking Water, please visit: www.whatsinyourwellwater.org

U.S. Dept. of Transportation Program Supports Infrastructure Project in Ellsworth, ME

[*More info on our array of economic development programs here.*](#)

RCAP Solutions is in the News!

We’re excited to share a recent feature in The Ellsworth American highlighting the City of Ellsworth, Maine’s transportation challenges, and how RCAP Solutions is helping to find meaningful solutions.

➡ [Read the article here.](#)

Together with city leaders and local stakeholders, RCAP hosted a site visit to explore strategies for improving walkability, stormwater infrastructure, and access to childcare. A walking and bus tour showcased opportunities for safer streets, stronger connectivity, and a more vibrant downtown.

This initiative is part of the Thriving Communities Program, funded and supported by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The program provides

technical assistance and capacity-building to help under-resourced communities access federal infrastructure funding and implement projects that reflect local transportation priorities.

Check out [photos from our recent series of site visits across coastal Maine](#) as part of the TCP. These events brought together local leaders, stakeholders, and residents to explore transformative transportation projects focused on improving mobility, expanding transit access, and driving economic growth.

Economic Recovery Corps Driving Impact in Rural Communities!

[Click here for more information on how your community might benefit from RCAP Solutions' Rural Infrastructure Strengths Evaluation \(RISE\) tool as part of our mission to empower small rural communities with the resources they need to thrive economically.](#)

The Economic Recovery Corps (ERC), a partnership between the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the International Economic Development Council, places experienced practitioners and mid-career professionals directly within local organizations to help communities secure funding and implement transformative projects.

In just one year, ERC host organizations have secured \$135 million in new investment, with \$93 million directed to rural-centered hosts, a remarkable return on the program's initial \$30 million launch.

From so-called "development deserts" to thriving communities, ERC Fellows are bridging capacity gaps and helping shape long-term economic resilience.

[Read more in this recent article from The Brookings Institution about how ERC delivers results—and why it matters](#)

[for rural America.](#)

As an ERC Host Site, RCAP Solutions is proud to have Elyse Oliver serving as our dedicated ERC Fellow. Elyse is leading a transformative project across Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont, addressing infrastructure development and economic sustainability challenges faced by rural communities.

[Check out this article on how the community of Boothbay, ME will be working with Ms. Oliver and utilizing the RISE program to promote economic development initiatives to boost the local economy.](#)

Water Leadership Program Launches in Puerto Rico

In May, RCAP's Community & Environmental Resources team successfully completed four full-day, bilingual training sessions of the Water Leadership Program in Caguas, Puerto Rico.

This pilot initiative, made possible through a combination of private foundation support from Spring Point Partners and federal funding from HHS, is designed for new and emerging water and wastewater utility staff, board members, and community leaders.

Delivering the program in Puerto Rico required significant effort to update the curriculum and adapt it to the cultural and linguistic needs of a Spanish-speaking audience, ensuring the content was both relevant and accessible.

This milestone marks an important step in building local capacity and empowering future leaders in water infrastructure across underserved communities.

RCAP Solutions Featured in RCAP's Latest Blog - The Value of Income Surveys

Check out the latest Drop of Knowledge blog from the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) featuring our very own Matt Cassedy, Connecticut State Manager, as he explores “The Value of Income Surveys.”

➡ [Read the article](#)

Income surveys are a vital tool for small and rural communities seeking funding for infrastructure and public health projects. In his article, Matt explains how these surveys help determine eligibility for grants and subsidies by accurately calculating Median Household Income (MHI), especially when census data doesn't tell the full story.

A Story of Alborada, Puerto Rico – RCAP Environmental Finance Center (EFC) Narrative

The neighborhood community of Alborada, Puerto Rico consists of 168 residents. During 2007, there was a large growth in community members, which led to the houses being installed with onsite septic systems. Shortly after the installation, several residents started experiencing issues with wastewater backing up into their homes and yards, which caused some to have to leave their homes. It was determined that the soil in this area could not filter the wastewater.

The community has struggled for over 20 years of trying to resolve the issues with its wastewater system. Recently, it was determined that the best option would be to try and connect to a local Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) system, which is a government-owned corporation. This video shows how RCAP is helping them work towards regionalization to eliminate their

wastewater issues.

[Watch the Video](#)

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Disposal Reduces Pollution

Hazardous waste reuse, recycling, and reclamation can avoid environmental hazards, protect scarce natural resources, and provide economic benefits.

In June, RCAP's Sarah Buck, New Project Director, and Edwin Vázquez-Asencio, Sustainable Materials Management Specialist, participated in a Household Hazardous Waste Certification Training alongside colleagues from across the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) network. As part of the training, they visited a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility just outside of Nashville, Tennessee.

In Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and beyond, we're committed to reducing pollution by helping communities improve solid waste management and promoting recycling efforts.

Learn more about our solid waste services here:
<https://www.rcapsolutions.org/solid-waste/>

Legislative Advocacy

We had an incredible year, with a wide range of meetings and activity, allowing our teams to advocate for

underserved communities on the national, state and local levels. Some examples include:

In April, the National Association of Counties, the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International, and the Rural Community Assistance Partnership convened the Rural Network—a coalition of organizations serving underserved communities—for the 2025 Rural Innovation Summit in Washington, D.C. RCAP Solutions President & CEO Brian D. Scales proudly represented the RCAP network and had the honor of introducing keynote speaker Senator Amy Klobuchar during the event.

In February, RCAP Solutions staff and community representatives representing the northeastern U.S. and Caribbean Islands attended the annual Fly-In in Washington DC, where the entire Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) network comes together to meet with elected officials and ensure effective coordination around federal priorities for RCAP assistance.

Team members engage with government representatives about the critical importance of water, wastewater, solid waste solutions, and economic development initiatives.

In December, Brian D. Scales, President & CEO, joined Olga Morales-Pate, President & CEO of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, and other partners in Washington, D.C. They represented the RCAP network at The White House's "Rural Innovators" Event.

The Biden-Harris Administration honored 14 individuals from across America who making a positive impact in their rural communities. Speakers at this event included; White House Domestic Policy Advisor Neera Tanden, White House Office of Public Engagement Director Stephen Benjamin, and Deputy Agriculture Secretary Xochitl Torres Small.

[Click here to take a look at our digital reporting tool](#) - a resource our teams use when meeting with legislators and stakeholders to showcase our impact. This interactive tool provides instant access to organizational information, case studies and community success stories, testimonials, project maps, staff listings, and contact details. It's a powerful way to learn more about our vital services and the difference we're making in underserved communities across the region.

Awards & Congratulations!

We're proud to celebrate Candace Balmer, Regional Director for NY/NJ/PA, as the recipient of the John Squires Hall of Fame Award from the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP). This prestigious honor recognizes Candace's outstanding contributions to RCAP and her unwavering commitment to rural communities over her 27 years of service. Her work has strengthened the RCAP Network, supported countless staff members through mentorship, and helped drive meaningful change across the region. The award is named in memory of John Squires, former Executive Director of Communities Unlimited, who led the organization from 1975 to 2014 and left a lasting legacy in rural development. Candace is a true asset to RCAP Solutions, the broader RCAP Network, and the communities we serve. We deeply appreciate her dedication, leadership, and impact.

Kevin Gardner, our talented Community Specialist from RI had an outstanding performance at the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA)'s Spring Meeting, competing in the prestigious "Wastewater Operations Challenge" – often dubbed the "Wastewater Olympics" and came out on top! Kevin's team, "Rising Sludge", delivered an exceptional performance, earning 1st place in both the Process Control and Maintenance categories. They also secured two 2nd-place finishes and a 3rd-place win, ultimately clinching the OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE!

Team Member Updates

RCAP Solutions had two new hires to the Community & Environmental Resources team in the past year:

**Madden Bremer, GIS
Specialist, ME**

*Ms. Bremer's experience
includes working to*

develop geospatial solutions at several large telecommunications companies, as well as a GIS Analyst. In prior roles, she has created and managed extensive geospatial databases containing a variety of data types, including GIS, CAD, and tabular data. She brings extensive experience with ArcGIS Pro, AutoCAD, 3GIS, and numerous other software and programming languages. In her current role at RCAP Solutions, she works with small systems to provide GIS utility mapping, asset management planning, source water protection services, and more.

Amanda Sparks, Community Specialist, ME

Ms. Sparks is a seasoned professional engineer with experience in wastewater treatment and collection system planning, design, and compliance. She has led multidisciplinary teams in various projects, ensuring regulatory compliance and operational efficiency. Her expertise includes conducting needs assessments, developing financial strategies, and providing technical assistance to support community-driven water and wastewater infrastructure projects. She brings extensive experience in regulatory compliance, infrastructure financing, and stakeholder engagement, working closely with municipal staff and operators to enhance system sustainability.

[State services and full staff listings and bios can be found here.](#)

Join Our Team!

We're asking our staff why
RCAP Solutions is their
employer of choice!

[Click here to meet Laurie
Stevens, Regional Director
- ME/NH/VT, who assists
rural community](#)

[specialists in Northern New England meet the requirements of their water and wastewater customers.](#)

Laurie describes the organizational culture at RCAP Solutions as "flexible and accommodating" and likes that the organization "put's family first". Our team is growing and we're in search of talented individuals who have a passion for serving individuals, families, and their communities. We have a variety of positions available in community and environmental resources, housing, and our corporate office.

To view our diverse array of available positions in the Northeast and Caribbean, please visit:
<https://www.rcapsolution.org/careers/>

Changemakers Wanted for Volunteer Opportunities!

Thoughtful, strategic, dynamic, innovative, professional... Do any of these attributes describe you?

We seek energetic leaders, representing New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands, with a wide range of expertise who want to change the world and empower communities to thrive.

For more information on our board and committee opportunities, please visit:
<https://www.rcapsolutions.org/board-volunteers/>

RCAP is an equal opportunity provider and employer and does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities.

RCAP Solutions earns a 2025 Platinum Seal of Transparency

RCAP Solutions has earned a 2025 Platinum Seal of Transparency! This seal is the highest level of recognition available from Candid and places RCAP Solutions in the very top percentage of non-profits for transparency and accountability. By sharing our impact, strategies, and financials, we aim to be transparent about our efforts to support the power and potential of communities. RCAP Solutions' EIN Number: 04-2454675

[Learn more through our Non-Profit Profile.](#)

[Learn more about how you can support our work by clicking here.](#)

RCAP Solutions mission is to foster personal and public self-reliance and improve the quality of life for individuals, families and the communities in which they live.

[Click here for more information about RCAP Solutions.](#)

This publication is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services (HHS/OCS). Its contents do not necessarily represent the policies of HHS/OCS or of RCAP Solutions, Inc. The views and opinions expressed here are solely those of the individual contributors. Permission is hereby granted for the use of any text or graphics contained in this publication, unless protected by copyrights, patents, or trademarks held by third parties. Copyright 2025 by RCAP Solutions, Inc.

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