RCAP Solutions works with communities to address a broad range of needs, including community infrastructure, and to promote public, environmental, and economic health.

RCAP Solutions is a member of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership. RCAP is a national network of regional nonprofit organizations that provide comprehensive, on-site technical assistance and training to help small, rural communities address their drinking water, wastewater, and other community development needs.
Located in the Northwest corner of Connecticut, the Town of Stafford Springs has a Water Pollution Control Authority that ensures that the Willimantic River basin is not adversely affected by development. The town’s aging wastewater infrastructure is in need of multiple capital improvements. RCAP Specialists will guide the community through the grant/loan application process. Furthermore, RCAP Specialists will provide technical assistance while also assisting with project development. In the past, RCAP Solutions at the request of USDA-RD assisted the community with Vulnerability Assessment and Emergency Response Planning work. The desired outcome will be a radical upgrade of the Wastewater infrastructure.

Hubbardston House Apartments, Hubbardston, Massachusetts – Drinking Water

The Hubbardston House apartments are a U. S. Housing and Urban Development elderly and disabled residence located in the rural Central Massachusetts Town of Hubbardston. The Hubbardston House apartments were having a nitrate contamination issue with their drinking water and are under a “Do Not Drink Order” from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

RCAP Solutions Specialists have assisted the Property Management of the Hubbardston House apartments identify the contamination source by fully evaluating the property’s on-site wastewater treatment system and identifying that the system was not installed as designed. RCAP Solutions Specialists oversaw the repair of the on-site wastewater system and since that repair Nitrate levels have abated to levels acceptable under Drinking Water Standards.

RCAP Solutions Specialists have also assisted the Property Management of the Hubbardston House with various compliance issues from previous Sanitary Survey Consent Orders and also assisted in long-term planning for the community’s drinking water system, to ensure continued compliance and long term sustainability.
Heritage Mobile Home Park is located in the seaside Town of Salisbury Massachusetts. This manufactured housing community's on-site wastewater treatment systems are located throughout the community and are not functioning as designed.

The community is under a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection consent order to remove these failing septic systems and install a new sewer system throughout the park that is tied in to the town's wastewater utility. Furthermore, the community is also under Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection order to replace the water distribution system throughout the park due to massive leaks.

RCAP Solutions staff has successfully performed an income survey at the request of USDA/RD to determine the income of the parks residents in hopes of qualifying for financial assistance, to fund the necessary repairs. The necessary levels of participation were obtained and the survey was found to be acceptable to USDA/RD for the purposes of qualifying the community for funding assistance to make these costly repairs.

RCAP Solutions will continue Technical Assistance to this community throughout the process of these required repairs and upgrades.

Alfred, Maine Water District – Asset Management

The goal for this asset management plan for the system includes four steps; Inventory and Replacement Schedule, Operations and Maintenance plan, Financial Strategies and a Capital Improvement Plan.

Deliverables, dependent upon the system’s commitment will include: CUPSS Asset Check-Up Report, Financial Check-Up Report and CUPSS Plan.

At a minimum, the project will provide all three of these reports but they could have caveats based upon the report status and system approvals.

The water district must review of inventory and attributes to ensure proper reflection of system equipment. This project will utilize CUPSS, EPA’s asset management software. RCAP Solutions will assist the water district with data entry and include analysis of the results for future operational efficiencies and long-term improvements and financial outlook.

As a result of this effort the community will have increased capacity at the local level in this area towards better management and a sustainable system over the long term.
RCAP Solutions will assist the Utility District by updating their 1984 sewer system map and creating a digital GIS map.

The Utility District Superintendent will give RCAP Solutions the set of maps from which to work. RCAP Solutions will digitize the maps and include pipe type, size and lengths. These map products and data will be in a flexible format so they can be incorporated in any future mapping or modeling.

The expected outputs and outcomes are: RCAP Solutions will utilize the work completed during the GIS mapping project to create a utility service area, infrastructure maps and information report for the District to review.

RCAP Solutions will create spreadsheet outputs that can be used to input additional asset management attribute information and analysis. The long term outcome is for the Sanitary District to increase capacity of the technical staff along with managerial and financial stakeholders to improve future capital improvement schedules and budgets.

Main Street, Dexter, Maine.

RCAP Solutions staff works with Dexter Utility District.
The Town of Newmarket has opted to be proactive in complying with a US EPA order affecting communities with wastewater treatment plants discharging to the Great Bay Estuary system in coastal New Hampshire. The purpose of the EPA directive is to mitigate nitrogen discharge into Great Bay, the effect of which is to cause deleterious changes in the eelgrass and oyster beds of the bay, affecting a major spawning ground for marine species, and thus a significant economic resource to the fishery and recreational sectors in the region.

The project is estimated to cost $14.1 million, and is necessary to reduce the nitrogen discharge from 30mg/l down to 8mg/l, and ultimately to 3mg/l. The Selectboard of Newmarket is seeking to minimize the already large impact that such an expense will have on the users of the sewer system. User rates are projected to rise to around $18 per 100 cubic feet.

RCAP was contacted to assist the Town in conducting an income survey of the users of the sewer system to determine if $500,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds can be brought into the funding equation, and supplement funds from the USDA Rural Development Water and Waste Loan/Grant Program, and the NH Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

After researching the available census data and conferring with the NH Community Development Finance Authority’s CDBG Program Manager, we determined that the area covered by the sewer system has, according to the American Community Survey (US Census), a Low/Moderate Individuals Percentage of 44.8%, which is below the CDBG application eligibility threshold of 51%. RCAP thus agreed to assist with an income survey. In Newmarket’s case, they have chosen to conduct two mailings, and, if necessary, door-to-door canvassing to complete the survey. Four-hundred (400) survey questionnaires, including self-addressed stamped envelopes addressed to RCAP Solutions’ NH office, were sent to randomly selected households. RCAP analyzes the returns and reports the results to the Water and Sewer Superintendent.

As of this writing, the results are showing little variance from the ACS data. RCAP will continue to advise the community on their options. We anticipate that the outcome will be an enhanced understanding of the eligibility for grant funds, and at the minimum (a finding of ineligibility for CDBG), a plan for alternative ways of mitigating rate impacts to vulnerable populations served by the sewer system.
Ogdensburg Borough is a rural community located on the Wallkill River in Sussex County, NJ, approximately 50 miles northwest of New York City, NY.

Ogdensburg Borough covers approximately 2.3 square miles and was formerly the home of the New Jersey Zinc Company, which was opened in 1990.

According to the 2000 US Census, there are 881 households in the Borough with a Median Household Income of $60,313. The Borough population is 2,638.

At the request of a USDA/RUS Loan Specialist, RCAP Solutions was asked to provide technical assistance in helping the community with a rate analysis and rate restructuring plan for the water system. RCAP Solutions staff met several times with the system CFO to review and analyze finances.

Overall, Ogdensburg was in good fiscal shape making debt service payments and funding reserve accounts. RCAP noticed that the system was drawing down heavily on reserve funds to balance the budget. A new billing system had been put in place and budget deficits began when the transition from the old system took place.

The billing system software had some bugs pertaining to decimal placement with remote meter readings from newly installed meters when uploaded to print customer bills. This problem was corrected by the vendor, but may have led to the under billing of customers. Also during the billing system transition, only half the system received new meters. The remainder of customers self-reported their bills via a card mail in system which was not verified by system staff. This also may have caused the under billing and lost revenues.

At RCAP’s suggestion a resolution was passed in FY 2013 to replace all system meters with the newer models and as of FY 2014, Ogdensburg finances have stabilized since the meter installation.

RCAP Solutions will continue to monitor finances and provide technical assistance to the Ogdensburg Borough by assisting with a rate analysis and restructuring plan for the water system, as needed. This will build capacity by enabling them to continue to have sufficient revenues to cover operating expenses and debt service payments while replenishing reserve accounts.

Backwards Tunnel, aka the Ogdensburg Railroad Arch, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
The Esopus Creek originates high in the Catskill Mountains and is bisected by the New York City Ashokan Reservoir. The lower Esopus Creek is the segment below the Reservoir that descends 30 miles to the Hudson River. On its journey, the lower Esopus passes through seven municipalities. Over the centuries the creek and its watershed has been an inestimable resource to the region. Native and Europeans alike were attracted by the extraordinarily fertile fields of the lowlands; early industry was supported by the creek-driven mills dotted along its length; and today the creek supports the local tax base with its beauty and accessibility, and is a magnet for recreation and tourism, attracting boaters, fishers, and nature enthusiasts. Despite centuries of human impact, the lower Esopus Creek is home to an incredible diversity of birds, fish, plants and animals that make up a vital ecosystem.

RCAP Solutions has been assisting the seven municipalities of the lower Esopus for several years. Some of the major accomplishments that were enabled in part as a result of the RCAP assistance include: 1. the formation of the Lower Esopus Watershed Partnership (LEWP), including the seven municipalities along the lower Esopus stream corridor; 2. completion of a stream corridor River Reconnaissance Report; 3. community outreach and education through the development of education materials such as the beautiful informational booklet “A Journey Through Lower Esopus Creek” and an accompanying recreation map, as well as numerous other outreach activities; 4. creation of a Lower Esopus Watershed Management Plan, Phase 1; 5. Assisting with research and funding applications, most recently, to address several large woody debris jams blocking the creek; and 6. securing community participation as valued members of the NYC DEP-hosted Ashokan Release Working Group (ARWG).

The ARWG is a multi-stakeholder group that was formed in 2011 in response to community concerns resulting from intentional and unprecedented releases from the Ashokan Reservoir to the lower Esopus to alleviate turbidity in the reservoir. Since the reservoir’s construction in 1915, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had never before intentionally released water downstream, the only contribution to the lower Esopus from its former headwaters being that which spilled over the dam when waters were high. The combination of prolonged high-volume high-turbidity releases to the creek created tremendous concern in downstream communities: streambanks that hadn’t seen inundation like that for 100 years were destabilized, swirling muddy water created a safety hazard and interfered with agricultural activities along the creek, recreation was disrupted, and the communities were devastated by the constant muddy waters flowing through their once-beautiful creek.

Through the ARWG, DEP is working with local communities to share information, work out compromises, and foster the protection of the creek and its communities moving forward. RCAP has helped to voice the concerns of lower Esopus communities as a member of the Ashokan Reservoir Working Group since its inception in 2011 and has served as Coordinator of the ARWG Technical Committee since it was formed in early 2014.
RCAP assists USDA and Broad Top Township with technical assistance on financial and managerial reporting and training on Asset Management for a sewer line extension. RCAP staff conducted a system training with the leadership on USDA reporting requirements and the local officials also enjoyed a preview of Asset Management. RCAP closely coordinates all activities with USDA, the Bedford County Planning Commission and the Broad Top Township Supervisors. All entities are pleased with this coordinated effort and benefit from the RCAP training and technical assistance. This USDA Rural Development project referral is for a community in rural Bedford County with a historically low median household income and many diverse needs. Broad Top Township is in the northeast corner of Bedford County and while much of Bedford County has an agricultural economy, this area lays claim to a history of coal mining, which damaged many of the local streams. With its many water and sewer needs, this area also serves as one of the historical RCAP "legacy" projects. Since the 1990s, many technical assistance providers from RCAP Solutions have assisted in project development tasks from RFP development to funding assistance.

Outcomes of this work are the following:

- Sustainable infrastructure and manageable rates
- Local leadership knowledgeable about RCAP and the tools we offer
- Sufficient reserves to cover costs of asset improvement, replacement and repair
- Sound budgeting and financial and managerial practices and policies that are adhered to
- Updated Emergency Response Plans and Vulnerability Assessments

This particular community also serves as one of RCAP’s original decentralized wastewater projects in Pennsylvania. More recently, RCAP staff conducted a system training with the leadership on USDA reporting requirements and the local officials also enjoyed a preview of Asset Management.

Top: Sukh Singh, Director of Education and Training for RCAP Solutions presenting to the Broad Top Township.

Right: East Broad Top Railroad, Orbisonia, PA.
An integral part of our planning is the assistance of Sukh Singh and RCAP Solutions. Ms. Singh has already invested several hours in guiding the executive board in the proper direction. We have made use of three of the RCAP education and training department publications. We also plan to avail ourselves of educational workshops with Ms. Singh and RCAP Solutions for further training and assistance in obtaining financing for this public works project. RCAP Solutions is crucial to our small rural community and others like us. I strongly urge you to provide whatever support you can through your office towards RCAP Solutions. I know that Nemacolin Inc.’s project will take several years to plan and complete. It would help us greatly to know that we can rely on continued funding for RCAP Solutions and, in turn, RCAP Solution’s training and guidance through this project.

Angela Visnesky
Vice President, Nemacolin, Inc

RCAP utilizes Health and Human services funding to improve water and wastewater facilities in small, low-income, rural communities. RCAP staff annually provide a variety of key training programs, serve on advisory councils and develop innovative programming in addition to serving over 600-700 communities with on-site technical assistance. For FY 2014 so far, RCAP Solutions staff have delivered long-term technical assistance to over 114 communities, delivered 130 technical assistance consultations to additional communities and we have conducted over 50 trainings to 289 community members. Currently RCAP Solutions staff also participate in 16 task forces and program activities throughout our northeast region.

RCAP staff utilize HHS funding to serve the following communities in Pennsylvania:

- Nemacolin, Greene County
- Brave Water and Sewer, Greene County
- Monongahela Township, Greene County
- Defiance, Bedford County
- Borough of Mount Union, Huntingdon County
- Alexandria Borough Porter Township JSA, Huntingdon County
- Green County Planning & Development Commission, Greene County
- Tioga County Source Water Protection Coalition
- Dover Township, York County
- Borough of Ebensburg, Cambria County
- Greencastle, Franklin County
- Wayne Township, Greene County
- Dunkard Township, Greene County
- Dunkard-Bobstown JMA, Greene County
- Refton Village, Lancaster County
- Potter Township, Centre County
- Freeland Borough, Luzerne County

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Farmington, PA.
The Municipal Authority of the Borough of Shenandoah is a rural water system providing potable water and fire protection to approximately 3,080 residential customers located in Shenandoah Borough, West Mahanoy Township and Butler Township in Schuylkill County.

The community is in economic and social transition as a diminishing coal industry loses jobs and the overall region experiences an overall economic slowdown in the region. There has been an increase in the minority population, especially from the Mexican community.

According to the 2010 Census, Shenandoah Borough has a median household income of $26,254. RCAP provides technical assistance to the Authority with the preparation of the USDA/RUS Annual and Quarterly Financial Reports.

In 2014, RCAP assisted the manager with the preparation of the FY 2015 budget. The system was experiencing a high number of delinquent accounts, had to replace a large reservoir transfer pump and repaired a high number of water main breaks due to the severe winter.

RCAP calculated a rate increase of 20% was needed to balance the budget and fund reserve accounts. This increase was adopted by the board and system finances have begun to stabilize. The wind turbines (shown in the picture) are a nice non-operating revenue source for the water system from land leases to the turbine company.

The help provided by RCAP Solutions will better enable the Shenandoah to manage their finances and to meet the covenants of their USDA/RUS loan.

Wind turbines in Shenandoah, PA.
The Chariho Regional School District has four small water systems, each supplying the High School, Middle School, Ashaway and Charlestown Elementary Schools. A recent lead and copper hit has brought the District to the attention of the Rhode Island Department of Public Health. Three of the four water systems require treatment, and each treatment system is in need of upgrade.

Operators of the systems are seeking assistance in receiving training specific to the running of these systems, as well as possible certification of additional operators.

RCAP Solutions Specialists are working with the school district to achieve and maintain compliance at all four of the District’s water systems. They have performed a needs assessment on each of the systems to identify and prioritize deficiencies and assisted in the development of a corrective action plan, submitted to the Department of Public Health. The group is currently working on the implementation of the steps outlined and in addition to the requested training, RCAP is also working on asset management and assistance with equipment replacement to achieve the required treatment.

RCAP Solutions Specialists are working to assist the system to achieve compliance and get connected with the resources to successfully manage the system going forward. They have facilitated multiple meetings between the board, primacy and residents to repair the well pump and obtain an evaluation of the current status and future needs of the system. RCAP Specialists will continue to work with the Glendale Water Association in planning for asset management and with a restructure the rate system.
The non-profit Randolph Area Community Development Corporation (RACDC) was in negotiations to purchase a 16-unit mobile home south of Randolph Center.

The park needs significant upgrades to their drinking water system, as well as the wastewater infrastructure. In order to secure the supposed level of eligibility for financing with USDA Rural Development, an income survey of the residents was required.

RCAP Solutions responded to the call and was prepared to start immediately, when another buyer with an alternate offer appeared. This deal fell through, and RCAP was called back to assist the RACDC.

Consultations with the Executive Director of the RACDC resulted in adequate warning of the residents that a survey was to be done. The survey was completed in a single visit to the park, thanks to the RACDC and great cooperation from the residents.

The results showed that the Median Household Income (MHI) of the residents was $22,342. This is significantly lower than Randolph Town’s MHI ($49,226), which makes them eligible for up to $150,000 in USDA RD grant funds, although the actual amount is yet to be determined.

Without the timely RCAP assistance with the survey, the maximum grant they would have been eligible for is $90,000.

These grant funds will result in more affordable water and wastewater charges, and an overall increase in affordability in what the new owners – RACDC – will charge to the residents for their monthly rents.

Downtown Randolph, VT.
RCAP Solutions organized a neighborhood trash clean-up event in January, in the community of Manzanilla, located in southern Puerto Rico.

Over 300 volunteers participated in the all-day event collecting tires, furniture, plastics, electronics and other items, which had been strewn about, impacting the neighborhoods, the Jacaguas River and the beaches along the areas coast.

The group effort included members of the Solid Waste Authority of Puerto Rico, the PR Department of Natural Resources, state and local police, local government officials, students from the University of Puerto Rico, high school students, teachers and community groups such as boy scouts, church groups, and others concerned with the condition of the community and its beaches.

Volunteers were trained on how to handle waste and hazardous materials and given gloves, bags and tracking sheets. The group was also provided with educational information on recycling, water and wildlife conservation and illegal dumping and burning.

The 100% volunteer initiative was incredibly successful with 15 truck-loads of trash, approximately 100 cubic yards, hauled away and a wood chipper was used to break down organic material. Residents in the area offered food, drink and home cooked meals to volunteers throughout the course of the day. After the clean up, state police officers dressed in clown costumes, set up bounce houses and provided face painting and other entertainment for the local children.

Many of the participating volunteers came from other communities and asked to host similar clean up events in their neighborhoods. Others expressed enthusiasm, saying they had been skeptical, but felt very optimistic about the community efforts and end results. Many underserved areas of Puerto Rico lack the resources to offer recycling and residents lack an understanding of the benefits.

The event was made possible due to a grant from USDA Rural Development with Rural Communities Assistance Partnership, our national affiliate. Key partners included Solid Waste Authority of PR (ADS), the PR Department of Natural Resources, the University of Puerto Rico of Ponce, as well as the waste management, police, and elected officials of the Municipio of Juana Diaz.
As small rural communities strive to solve their water and wastewater challenges they can find themselves overwhelmed by the high cost of implementing these kinds of improvements. Typically, small communities reach out to three primary infrastructure funding programs: USDA Rural Development (RD), the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF), and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. These low-interest loan and grant programs often make the difference in whether or not a small community can afford a needed project.

A key element in documenting project eligibility under these programs is a demonstration of financial need. RD and SRF key awards to the Median Household Income while the CDBG program requires documentation that 51% or more of the residents served by the project meet the criteria of low-to-moderate income individuals. Census data is often not representative of the project service area and/or may be outdated so the community must undertake their own study: the Income Survey. RCAP has been assisting communities complete income surveys as a core service since they came into being.

RCAP acts as a disinterested third party that can assist with determining the need for the survey, identifying the survey universe, crafting the survey questions to meet the requirements of the involved funders, receive and process the surveys, and maintain confidentiality. RCAP also trains volunteers to conduct neighborhood canvassing and may assist with canvassing. Door-to-door canvassing is usually required to ensure that the community meets the survey response rates required by the funders.

In recent years, as funding programs get more competitive, some funding agencies have increased their requests for independent documentation of project incomes through the income survey. In New York in the past several months, RCAP has conducted or is conducting at least 10 income surveys to document project funding eligibility. RCAP was also requested by USDA Rural Development to assist in the creation of a survey form and guidance document that can be used by communities seeking to document eligibility under all three funding programs at one through a single form. This guidance will be posted on the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) Co-Funding website.

Candace Balmer, Community Development Specialist for RCAP Solutions, performs an income survey in New York.
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The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) is a national network of nonprofit organizations working to ensure that rural and small communities throughout the United States have access to safe drinking water and sanitary wastewater disposal.

The six regional RCAPs – its partners or affiliates – provide a variety of programs in their section of the United States to accomplish this goal, such as direct training and technical assistance; leveraging millions of dollars to assist communities develop and improve their water and wastewater systems.

The work in communities is coordinated and carried out by each of RCAP’s regional partners. The network includes a national office in Washington, D.C., that coordinates funding, reporting and finances for the programs and handles communications at a national level for the network. For more information, visit www.rcap.org.