Greetings!

Welcome to the Fall 2017 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 community issues. Our articles are now housed on the RCAP Solutions blog, which can be found by clicking here. As always, we appreciate your feedback on this publication and welcome your input on anything regarding RCAP Solutions and our services.

Please click here for staff contact information.

Puerto Rico, U.S.V.I. and Recovery Efforts

Our thoughts go out to those in Puerto Rico, the U.S.V.I. and the many others as they recover from the crippling effects of the recent hurricanes and other natural disasters. For almost 50 years, RCAP Solutions has been a vital resource to those in rural communities when they have critical need for assistance. We're working with our staff and partner agencies in those areas to assess the most pressing short term and long-term needs. In the coming weeks, we'll be outlining new initiatives that will provide funds and assistance to those in need as they work to rebuild their homes and communities.

RCAP, Our National Affiliate, Announces New Executive Director

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, a national organization facilitating access to safe drinking water and sanitary wastewater disposal to rural communities, has announced the selection of Nathan Ohle as its new executive director. Nathan fills the vacancy created by Robert B. Stewart's retirement. The selection was made after a national search and selection process.

We look forward to welcoming Nathan to the Northeast Region when he will be joining the RCAP Solutions Board of Directors Annual Meeting in Worcester next month.

Click here to read more...

CUPSS Testimonial from Sterling, MA

'I took over the Sterling water department in 2009. At that time there were no programs, records or capital plans. Never being in charge of a department before this one, it was a monumental task to get it back in compliance. One month after taking over we lost the only trained employee on staff. We had a mile of main that needed replacement right away, all tanks needed cleaning, two tanks needed complete rehab, and wells needed redevelopment. I had to prioritize projects, go for funds...
and train new people while juggling the department and starting maintenance programs. I am a hands on person and paperwork is my weakest link. Along came Jim Starbard, RCAP Solutions and CUPSS.

For the complete testimonial and more information about CUPSS, click here.

Honey Pot Hill Orchards, Stow, MA

Honey Pot Hill Orchards is a family run business located in Stow, Massachusetts, about 30 miles west of Boston. Stow is a small, quiet town of approximately 6,600 residents. When Clifford Martin purchased the 180-acre farm in 1926, he sold apples, pears and peaches both wholesale and retail. His son, Richard, was one of the first in the country to offer pick-your-own apples; and that experience continues with Richard's son and granddaughter. Andrew and Chelcie Martin are currently the third and fourth generation and run a fully retail operation with pick-your-own apples, peaches and blueberries, as well as a retail and bake shop, a maze and other family-friendly fun and entertainment. These resourceful business owners now operate their thriving family legacy which is currently nominated as one of USA Today's Best Apple Orchards of 2017.

For the entire history of the business, the farm has utilized one drilled well with no treatment for the labor residence, public bathrooms and operation of the cider press and snack bar. In late 2015, the farm contacted the town health department to inspect a new donut machine in the snack shop. The inspector had recently retired and the town was now utilizing an association of boards who were not familiar with the farm. During the on-site inspection, the farmers were informed that they should be a public water system and that they had already been reported to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP).

For the full story, click here.

Advocating for Rural Communities

RCAP Solutions Staff participates in the Rural Community Assistance Partnership's Annual Fly In in Washington DC.

On left: Josefa Torres, District Director- PR & USVI and Arthur Astarita, Maine State Lead with Angus King Jr., United States Senator from Maine. On right: Scott Mueller, Chief Rural Affairs Officer and Director of Community Resources, and Candace Balmer, New York State Lead, met with Laura Driscoll, Senator Gillibrand's Legislative Aid.

Education is Key to Implement Change

Capitanejo, Guaraguao, Guayabal and Rio Cañas Arriba are rural barrios in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico (PR) which are served through a USDA-RD Solid Waste Grant.

Since the fall of 2014 RCAP Solutions has provided technical assistance to overcome one of the most noticeable problems in these communities: the improper disposal of solid waste. Even when the municipality provides services such as weekly trash collection and monthly or bimonthly debris removal, many community residents do not participate in these initiatives to reduce solid waste generation. This demonstrates a current lack of interest or knowledge about how to solve their mounting solid waste disposal situation. The most probable reason for this behavior is a lack of environmental education and a low level of awareness of both the problem and its short and long term consequences.

For the full story, click here.
Andrews Farm Water Company - Technical Assistance Re-Building a Water System

Located in the Northeast Massachusetts Town of Boxford and developed in 1994, the Andrews Farm residential community was the first community built under Massachusetts's Chapter 40B law. This law requires that a minimum of 25% of the community has an income at 80% or below the area median income.

On the request of USDA's Rural Development Office (RD), RCAP Solutions met with the community and worked with them to develop an asset management plan using US EPA's Check up Program for Small Systems (CUPSS). With that asset and capital improvement information and then calculating the depreciation of assets, RCAP performed a system value evaluation which has been accepted by RD to facilitate a future sale of the system.

At this point in the project the focus shifted from assisting the water system through a sale to an emergency situation when on June 17, 2016 at 5:30 pm the community's 3,000-gallon pneumatic drinking water storage tank exploded. The explosion destroyed much of the water system's infrastructure including its pump house, and the incident left 53 homes without running water. I was at home watching the local evening news that night and saw the breaking news come in live.

For the full story, click here.

Education & Training

It's been a tremendously busy year for education and training in RCAP Solutions territory. Our staff provided 55 trainings in the last fiscal year to almost 850 attendees.

We have partnered closely with USDA-Rural Development to deliver Workshop In a Box In a Multisystem Format and to individual systems. We are also working closely with AWWA Sections in all of our states to deliver quality operator training that focuses on small systems.

Pictured above are shots from the recent Workshop in a Box “Supertour”, where our Technical Assistance Providers offered training on sustainable management of rural and small systems in Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire all in one week to over 65 attendees.

For a list of upcoming training events throughout the Northeast region, click here for our calendar.

Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) - A small but important funding source

RCDI is specifically targeted to training and technical assistance for rural low-income communities and affords them opportunities they might not otherwise get access to. The community must be 80% below the state non-metropolitan median household income and below a maximum population threshold of 50,000. The communities that have participated in utility mapping and managerial and financial capacity building with RCAP Solutions with this funding would not have been able to afford these valuable services otherwise.

Many of the communities that RCAP Solutions works with have no maps of their system at all or very outdated and/or incomplete maps. Full system mapping enables them to: respond quickly to minimize threatened or actual interruption of service; facilitate asset tracking and repair and replacement planning and implementation; provide documentation for system upgrade engineering reports and funding applications; and support emergency planning and response activities. In the northeast U.S., GPS locating of assets is critical in the winter months when valuable time can be lost finding and uncovering system components. The maps are created in both digital and physical formats for the community and they receive training on how to access and manipulate the digital maps for optimal system operation and management.

For additional information, click here.

Click here to see a map of communities served by RCAP Solutions, under USDA Rural Community Development Initiative.
Click here to read our case study on Blossburg, a rural coal mining community in northern Pennsylvania and how they benefited from a RCDI grant to provide GPS and GIS mapping services.

RCAP Solutions Staff Receives National Award

Congratulations to Edwin Vazquez-Asencio, Sustainable Materials Management Specialist at RCAP Solutions Puerto Rico, who received the Outstanding Rookie Award at the RCAP National conference!

Read more about Edwin here.

Pictured from left, Karen A. Koller, President and CEO; Edwin Vazquez-Asencio, Sustainable Materials Management Specialist; Juan Campos-Collazo, Community Development Specialist; and Josefa Torres-Olivo, District Director at the RCAP National Awards Reception.

Welcome New Team Members!

Welcome to the two newest members of the Community Resources Team! Sarah Buck, Deputy Director of Community Resources joined RCAP Solutions in January 2017 and has been involved in the water management and community development industry for the last seven years. Erick Toledo, Water Specialist joined RCAP Solutions in April and has more than 15 years’ experience working in water, wastewater and solid waste management internationally and domestically. To view their full bios, click 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.

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