

WV Watershed Network

Project Summary

March 15, 2006

Wastewater Treatment Coalition of McDowell County

The Wastewater Treatment Coalition of McDowell County began as a loose-knit group of organizations and local officials who had grown increasingly concerned about the lack of adequate wastewater treatment in many parts of the county. The Coalition started meeting in January 2003 with community leaders, representatives from Congressman Rahall's office and state agencies. Repeatedly, it was suggested that Coalition members help to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing McDowell's wastewater needs.

Since these initial meetings, the Coalition has completed a septic system database, developed a comprehensive assessment of wastewater treatment in the county, completed workshops on wastewater options, toured successful alternative system sites, completed demonstration models in the county, secured support from the County Commission and Public Service Districts, and completed a Wastewater Treatment Plan for the county.

McDowell County Members

FACES

Health Department

Citizen's Conservation Corps

Elkhorn Creek Watershed Association

Parks and Recreation

SAFE

WVU Extension

County Commission

Council of the Southern Mountains

Rural Health Advisory Council

Richmorr and Associates

First Presbyterian Church

Mustard Seeds & Mountains

Cities of War, Anawalt, Iaeger, Gary,

Bradshaw, Northfork and Welch

Economic Development Authority

Redevelopment Authority

Partners

Canaan Valley Institute

WV Ministry of Advocacy and Work Camps, Inc.

White Oak Environmental

Stafford Consultants, Inc.

Rural Community Assistance Program

WV DEP

Mountain RC&D

WV DNR

WV Development Office

Region I Planning and Development

Council

Needs assessment overview

WTCMC, with assistance from CVI and partner organizations, compiled data from multiple sources to adequately capture the current status of wastewater treatment in the county. These data sources included:

- County septic permits. All permits in the county health department office were digitized, and assigned a parcel number.
- Municipal treatment systems. Plant operators were interviewed, and mapped out extent of current service lines.
- NPDES permits were collected to identify existing package plants.
- Parcel data.

The final assessment showed:

1. Approximately 24% of county residents are served by municipal treatment systems,
2. 8% have septic tanks,
3. >1% are served by package plants,
4. 67% of McDowell residents have no approved wastewater treatment; that equates to 7,480 homes, or over 18,000 people.

In addition, the Coalition has worked with WVDEP to sample county streams for fecal coliform, and found that almost all streams have fecal counts well above the “impaired” threshold, with some counts exceeding 400,000 & 500,000 colonies/100ml.

Project status

With the assessment completed, the Coalition and its partners identified 97 project areas and assigned a preliminary cost-effective treatment technology to each area. Project areas were then prioritized according to:

- economic development in the immediate vicinity,
- proximity to the floodplain,
- community willingness,
- funding potential, and
- number of homes served.

One demonstration project, an Advantex textile filtration system was installed at the Big Sandy Headstart facility. Plans are now being completed for a system in the community of Ashland. Additional projects are being ‘packaged’ for submission to the WV Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council and other funders.

Funding sources

Much of the assessment and planning effort has been volunteer, with significant support from partner organizations.

Funding for the Big Sandy demonstration project was provided by the WV Ministry of Advocacy and Workcamps. Funding for pending projects is anticipated from: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program, WV DEP’s 319 Program, CVI, a private developer, and possibly low-interest loans through the housing organization SAFE.

For the proposed larger sewage system extensions, the Coalition will be working closely with Region 1 Planning and Development and county government to submit applications to traditional infrastructure funders, including USDA, ARC, Small Cities Block Grant program and others.

Local buy in

The WTCMC is a locally-led consortium of organizations and county residents. Education and outreach has been part of the Coalition’s work since its inception, and this will be increasingly emphasized as projects move closer to implementation. One of the weighted criteria used to prioritize projects has been “community willingness,” and this has been determined through surveys made available to all residents.