



The Hardship Grants Program for Rural Communities

The U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) has developed guidelines for a new grant program to help small, disadvantaged rural communities address their wastewater treatment needs. The 1996 Congressional Appropriations Act reserved \$50 million from Clean Water State Revolving Fund appropriations to start the new *Hardship Grants Program for Rural Communities*.

Many rural communities lack the resources to afford the full cost of Clean Water State Revolving Fund loans to improve their outdated or failing wastewater treatment services. The Hardship Grants Program is designed to complement the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, which allows states to make loans to communities and individuals for high-priority water-quality projects. States are

provided a high degree of flexibility in how they manage the new Hardship Grants Program, and are responsible for selecting projects.

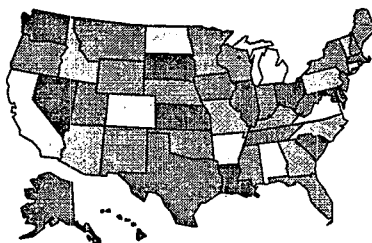
...a new grant program to help small, disadvantaged rural communities

Under the new program, EPA will award grants to the states, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Territories, which in turn will provide hardship assistance to small communities (see diagram at left). EPA's guidelines encourage the states to assist rural communities by supplementing Clean Water State Revolving Fund loans with hardship grant assistance.

How the program works...

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency makes grants to each State, plus Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories (Step 1), and then States provide assistance to eligible rural communities (Step 2).

US EPA



Communities

States may award hardship assistance to qualifying communities for the planning, design, and construction of publicly owned treatment works or alternative wastewater services, such as on-site treatment systems (including septic). States may also use hardship assistance to provide training, technical assistance and educational programs on the operation and maintenance of wastewater treatment systems.

Under the Hardship Grants Program, any rural community with fewer than 3,000 residents can qualify for hardship assistance from its state program if it meets the following criteria:

- ✓ The community lacks access to centralized wastewater treatment or collection systems, or needs improvements to on-site wastewater treatment systems;
- ✓ The proposed project will improve public health or reduce environmental risk;
- ✓ The community's per capita income rate is less than 80 per cent of the national average; and
- ✓ Its unemployment rate exceeds the national average by one percentage point or more.

Copies of the new national *Hardship Grants Program for Rural Communities* guidelines, as well as contact information for your state program representative, are available by contacting EPA (see below). □

HOW CAN MY COMMUNITY APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE?

To apply for assistance under the *Hardship Grants Program for Rural Communities*, your community will need to:

- ◆ Contact your state's Hardship Grants Program representative, from whom you can obtain the following information:
- ◆ State-specific and national Hardship Grants Program guidelines;
- ◆ Application information for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program and the Hardship Grants Program; and
- ◆ Information about how your proposed project may be added to your state's Clean Water State Revolving Fund Intended Use Plan (IUP). □

For more information...

For a copy of the national *Hardship Grants Program for Rural Communities* guidelines or for your state's Hardship Grants Program representative, please contact:



Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, Mailcode 4204
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, DC 20460
© Telephone: (202) 260-2268 ▼ Fax: (202) 260-1827
Internet web site: <http://www.epa.gov/OWM>

For additional copies of this fact sheet, or to receive other information about EPA, please call the National Center for Environmental Publications and Information toll-free at (800) 490-9198.