



SEP 3 0 2013

Dear Water Leader:

We write to you today to seek your assistance in getting the word out on two new exciting tools for rural and small water and wastewater disposal systems. These are tools designed for rural and small systems with extensive input from operators and managers of rural and small systems. Reliable and affordable water and wastewater treatment are critical to the quality of life for small and rural communities throughout the Nation. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are committed to keeping America's rural and small communities strong, safe, and sustainable. In 2011, our agencies signed a Memorandum of Agreement pledging to work together to help rural and small communities effectively manage a range of challenges facing them as they seek to provide clean and safe water to their residents. With the help of rural industry partners like you, we developed two tools to help rural and small systems more effectively address these challenges. Today, we are excited to provide you with these tools and to seek your help in creating awareness about them.

The first is a *Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management*. Using best practices developed with input from rural operators, managers and industry leaders, the Guidebook takes rural and small systems through a series of steps to assess their current operations based on ten key management areas that cover all aspects of system operations. The Guidebook helps rural and small systems to assess their strengths and priorities for potential improvement and also develop an action plan to address these priorities. The approach outlined in the Guidebook was field tested through a series of workshops with rural and small system managers around the country and reflects the feedback we received from the workshops. The workshops were co-sponsored by local chapters of the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) and Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), as well as the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET).

The second tool is called the *Workshop in a Box*. It contains a series of materials and instructions to help both rural and small systems and service providers market and conduct workshops on their own based on the Guidebook. These materials can be used in either a group setting with several systems or on site with a team of individuals from one system. We hope these materials will help expand the number of workshops conducted with small systems.

As we move ahead, we look forward to working closely with you to make this important effort a success, building on the expertise of your members and local partners. If you or someone in your organization is interested in becoming a trainer, hosting a workshop, or hosting a train-the-trainer

event, please let us know by emailing one of our agency coordinators listed below. If this involves an individual, please provide the person's name, e-mail address, and phone number to:

USDA contact:

LaVonda Pernell

lavonda.pernell@wdc.usda.gov

EPA contact:

Jim Horne

Horne.james@epa.gov

In the meantime, we ask you to share these materials widely within your organization. The tools are available at the following web addresses:

http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UWEP_HomePage.html

<http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/watereum.cfm>

Thank you for your commitment to the sustainability of our Nation's rural and small water and wastewater systems.

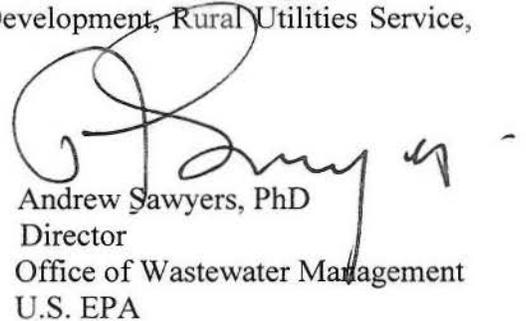
Sincerely,



Jacqueline Ponti-Lazaruk
Assistant Administrator
Water and Environmental Programs
Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service,
USDA



Peter C. Grevatt, PhD
Director
Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water
U.S. EPA



Andrew Sawyers, PhD
Director
Office of Wastewater Management
U.S. EPA