

The Rural Community Development (RCD) Program

Helping North Carolina's rural and tribal communities build and maintain safe water and wastewater systems



North Carolina State Facts

1,989 community water systems

1,714 water systems serve communities with fewer than 3,300 people

\$2.92 billion estimated water infrastructure need for small systems

33.3% of the population lives in a rural area

Sources: EPA, Census



About the RCD Program

The [Rural Community Development \(RCD\)](#) grant program builds capacity to create, expand, and maintain safe, affordable water and wastewater systems in rural areas. RCD serves very small communities in sparsely populated areas made up predominately of residents with low income who lack safe water and wastewater treatment services and sometimes even indoor plumbing. RCD tailors its support based on community need. It helps communities assess water and wastewater infrastructure and accessibility needs, helps identify and secure funding for water facility upgrades, builds capacity through local experts to establish and maintain water facilities, and trains water operators to ensure water systems are functional and compliant. There are currently [eight RCD grant recipients](#) — six regional organizations and two organizations that support tribal communities. RCD grant recipients [Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. \(SERCAP\)](#) and [United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. \(USET\)](#) serve communities in the state of North Carolina.

Examples of RCD's Support in North Carolina

Bryson City, North Carolina

Located in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina, the town of Bryson City enchants tourists with the promise of outdoor adventure and peaceful woodlands. The Nantahala Outdoor Center Water System was constructed to support tourism in the area. However, a recent surge in permanent residents exerted pressure on the compact water system, which was originally designed for a smaller population. With RCD funding, SERCAP dispatched staff to the site to collaborate with system operators in determining strategies for enhancing the system's capacity. SERCAP staff performed supply tank and well inspections and ultimately determined the need to build additional supply tanks and update the existing wells. SERCAP staff continue to work with the system operators to ensure that these changes are made. Once this project is complete, the water system will be able to support the growing population.

Godwin, North Carolina

Some residents on the outskirts of Godwin, a small town with a population of 139 people in Cumberland County, found contaminants including E. coli in their residential wells. A local church in Godwin also dealt with water quality issues for years. These issues required church members to bring bottled water for serving and cooking at events, thus limiting gathering at this community hub. With RCD funding, SERCAP identified funding options for Godwin and helped the town conduct the required income survey and select an engineering firm for the project. Due to Godwin's environmental issues and median household income of only \$18,332, USDA awarded the town a grant for the project. The engineering firm is working to bid on this project to improve water quality and access.

National Outcomes*

With the help of RCD:



\$742 million
in additional funding
secured for communities



83,000 residents
have gained access to
safe drinking water



49,000 residents
have gained access to
sanitary sewer systems



2,100 communities
served by RCD projects

*Outcomes for RCD grant recipients' work across the country since FY21



For more information about the Rural Community Development (RCD) Program, [visit the RCD website](#) and the [RCD Information and Data Dashboard](#).

For more information about OCS's other anti-poverty programs, [visit the OCS website](#).