

RCD Program Spotlight Lowndes County, AL

Training & Technical Assistance
to Support Safe, Affordable Water
& Wastewater Systems



About Lowndes County

Lowndes County, Alabama has had long standing problems with lack of access to sanitary sewer systems, untreated sewage, and failing or improperly installed septic tank system for the county's residents. Homeowners in the county experience septic tank and straight pipe septic system malfunction and disrepair, which means raw sewage from their homes is deposited directly into their yards, rivers, lakes, drain tiles, and ditches. While initial headway was made to rectify the unsewered households with funding support from USDA, the utility district that was formed was taken over by the county commissioners and the USDA obligation of funding was ultimately withdrawn around 2008. Since then, numerous attempts to restart the project work in Lowndes County have been made with limited success.

RCD Impact

[Communities Unlimited](#) (CU), a Rural Community Development (RCD) grant recipient, began working in 2002 in Lowndes County, Alabama, after a local request for assistance had been received through the national Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) office. CU staff engaged with local and national activists who were attempting to raise the awareness of the environmental justice issues in rural counties in the Alabama Black Belt region and worked alongside National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise founder, Robert L. Woodson, Sr., the late U.S. Representative John Lewis, Jessie Jackson, Jr., and local activists Bob Mants and Catherine Coleman Flowers.

RCD funds are used to provide training and technical assistance to:

- Increase access for families with low incomes to water supply and waste disposal services;
- Preserve affordable water and waste disposal services in low-income rural communities;
- Increase local capacity and expertise to establish and maintain needed community facilities;
- Increase economic opportunities for low-income rural communities by ensuring they have basic water and sanitation;
- Utilize technical assistance to leverage additional public and private resources; and
- Promote improved coordination of federal, state, and local agencies and financing programs to benefit low-income communities.

CU provided the following assistance in Lowndes County:

- Assisted with the formation of a county-wide sewer district;
- Provided initial board training and water infrastructure development technical assistance;
- Addressed the needs of unsewered households, and the utility district has since been taken over by the county commissioners; and
- Continued to support the water infrastructure and assistance project work in Lowndes County.

CU remains involved in Lowndes County, Alabama today and will not stop working until they are able to implement a sustainable solution that will ensure that unsewered households have access to adequate and sanitary waste disposal to improve public and environmental health.

For more information, visit the [RCD program webpage](#).



Rural Community
Development

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES