



# MOU Partnership Progress Report

## Partners Creating Pathways to Integrate Onsite/Decentralized Solutions Into Today's Wastewater Infrastructure

November 2011

In November 2008, EPA renewed a partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding with 14 public and private sector organizations to improve decentralized wastewater management in the U.S. In November 2011 the partnership continues to grow with the addition of CDC and NSF International. Since its creation in 2005, the partnership has generated many successes, marked by better cooperation, collaboration, consultation, and communication among the various organizations. Some of the highlights of the efforts put forth by the MOU participants since 2008 are listed below.



### Highlights

- **Increased Training and Workshops.** Attendance at training and workshops for installers and pumpers has increased markedly over the past three years, and feedback has been extremely positive. The partners have continued to collaborate on training efforts—relying on the combined strengths of each organization.
  - NAWT's training program for inspectors, maintenance professionals, and vacuum truck operators sponsored a total of 79 workshops for 2,900 participants during 2008-2011. CIDWT and other partners assisted in development of the course, which provides orientation for the NEHA installer credentialing program.
  - SORA and NEHA have partnered to increase the educational opportunities for regulators by joining together their conferences. This has led to more opportunities to build partnerships between state and local programs as well as increase knowledge in the latest developments in the decentralized wastewater field.
  - NEHA, NOWRA and SORA joined forces in 2011 to create a combined conference focused on decentralized wastewater. The conference brought together academia, regulators, contractors and industry to learn and work together for increased educational and awareness about the industry and included presentations and participation by many of the partners. All three groups look forward to joining together every three years.
- **Installer Credentialing Program.** A joint professional development program for system installers nationwide began in June 2006, featuring training workshops, a testing program, and a new credentialing initiative supported by several of the partner groups, which helped to develop a standardized curriculum and knowledge-based examining process.
  - Over 500 decentralized wastewater professionals have now taken the Certified Installer Credential (CIOWTS). NEHA continues to offer and promote the Certified Installer Credential. Through a partnership with the California Onsite Wastewater Association (COWA) and NAWT, the Certified Installer credential will be offered in conjunction with the NAWT Installer Training offered by COWA. The one-day Installer training will

also be offered at the NEHA conference where it will be captured for online viewing. COWA will also be offering their regulator out-reach program at the conference that will also be captured for use as an online training program.

The installer credentialing program is administered by NEHA, with NAWT, NOWRA, and CIDWT providing support and key assistance in curriculum development.

- **CIDWT** is leading development of a new training program for wastewater treatment system installers. CIDWT is being supported by NEHA, NAWT, NOWRA, installation professionals, and others.
- **Model Performance Code.** NOWRA continues to encourage state and local regulators to adopt the EPA-supported initiative to develop a model performance code for managing onsite and cluster wastewater treatment systems. Recently, both Colorado and California have used the Model Code as a key reference in revising their state onsite wastewater regulations.
- **Resource Guides.** WEF has produced 31 research and development projects that help communities, engineers, regulators, and others address critical knowledge and information gaps in decentralized systems. Most recently, RCAP produced three new guidebooks to assist small, rural communities in the management and operations of their drinking water and wastewater systems.
- **MOU “Partnership Alley”.** WEF organized the fifth annual MOU “Partnership Alley” at WEFTEC11, one of the Wastewater industry’s premier national conferences. Partner participation in the WEF Small Communities Committee has expanded and strengthened WEF’s support for decentralized systems as part of the nation’s wastewater treatment infrastructure.

- **MOU Exhibit Booth.** The partners continue to exhibit the MOU booth and have developed a variety of outreach materials for display at conferences and training workshops. This effort has helped tremendously in promoting the MOU partnership and its efforts.
- **Septic Wiki.** A collaborative website was developed that allows all registered users to share best practices, case studies, and lessons learned relating to decentralized systems. The wiki helps facilitate cooperation, collaboration, consultation, coordination, and effective communication among the MOU partners and those engaged in the decentralized wastewater management industry. To register go to: <https://ssoprod.epa.gov/sso/jsp/septicWikiLogin.jsp>.

## The Future Shines Bright

The ongoing success of the MOU partnership and extensive outreach regarding its benefits to the decentralized wastewater industry has created synergy among the partners and sparked interest among other organizations. Maintaining the momentum for the next three years will require a sustained effort by the partners to support the MOU partnership—especially in integrating the regulatory, policy, and research issues of the new partners into future MOU activities—while continuing to build upon the group’s shared goals and common interests. As the partnership moves through the remainder of 2011 and beyond, there will be an increased emphasis on improving consistency regarding management practices and linking management to treatment technology types, risk factors, and the condition of receiving waters. Training events, conferences, webcasts, and workshops will continue to play a major role in maintaining the viability of the partnership and enhancing the competency of the public agency.

## Our Partners

