



## RealWaterTA Project Profile

**Location:** Gallup District, Navajo Nation, New Mexico

**Initiative:** Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap

The Gallup District of the Indian Health Service (IHS), serving the Navajo Nation in McKinley County and around the City of Gallup, is located in northwestern New Mexico. Outside the city, homes are often far apart and rely on individual septic systems to manage wastewater. Many systems have outlived their design life and are failing, threatening public health and eroding quality of life.

The IHS addresses failed septic systems in tribal communities by identifying wastewater issues, prioritizing projects, and providing funding and technical assistance for repairs and replacements. Sanitation deficiencies are identified and reported to Congress through the Sanitation Deficiency System (SDS). In 2024 IHS identified 59 homes spread across the Gallup District with inadequate or failing septic systems and recorded them in the SDS for further action.

### Engineering Support

In April 2025, IHS requested technical assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap (CAWAG) Initiative to evaluate the 59 homes in the Gallup District. IHS staff completed a preliminary screening to identify and prioritize these homes for follow-up evaluation.

EPA and its contractors visited each home to assess the condition of its septic system by conducting visual inspections, interviewing homeowners for firsthand observations, and performing preliminary soil testing. Based on these findings, the contractors developed three options to address each home's wastewater and provided preliminary cost estimates of each option. These options ranged from installing new systems, repairing existing ones, or installing shared systems between nearby homes.

### Project Benefits

The technical assistance provided through CAWAG delivered detailed, site-specific technical information, including soil conditions, tailored onsite system recommendations, and preliminary cost estimates. These deliverables will help IHS advance the Gallup District project within the SDS funding system and make well-informed decisions about the most effective solutions for each home.

### Conclusion

The partnership between IHS and EPA demonstrates how federal agencies can leverage technical assistance initiatives to accelerate essential infrastructure work in tribal communities. The CAWAG Initiative was successful in quickly applying engineering expertise to infrastructure challenges in the Gallup District. With a clear plan in place, residents are on track to receive safe, more reliable wastewater treatment systems.