NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
FY2017 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST SUMMARY

Name of program: **EPA technical assistance competitive grant program**

Appropriations bill: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Senate subcommittee chairman: Senator Lisa Murkowski

Senate subcommittee ranking member: Senator Tom Udall

House subcommittee chairman: Representative Ken Calvert

House subcommittee ranking member: Representative Betty McCollum

Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Appropriations account: Environmental Programs and Management

Authorization: Safe Drinking Water Act (42 USC 300j-1(e))

President's budget request: $0

Funding History

FY2012	15,000,000
FY2013	12,700,000
FY2014	12,700,000
FY2015	12,700,000
FY2016	12,700,000

***FY2017 request:* $15,000,000**

The National Rural Water Association requests bill language (see below) appropriating $15 million to fund the provisions of PL 114-98, the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act, which continues a competitive grant program to provide rural communities with the technical assistance necessary to improve water quality and provide safe drinking water. Small and rural communities rely on local/on-site technical assistance and training for compliance with federal EPA regulations, avoiding EPA fines, and operating drinking and wastewater supplies.

Rural communities believe this is the most effective initiative to aid compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act. These communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance—this initiative provides them the technical resources to do so.

Bill Language

***Provided further*, That of the funds included under this heading, $15,000,000 shall be for technical assistance as authorized by 42 U.S.C. 300j–1(e)**

EPA Technical Assistance Justification: Increase from $12,700,000 to $15,000,000

EPA Technical Assistance Authorization: The President signed the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act into law (Public Law 114-98) on December 11, 2015. The House of Representatives unanimously passed the bill on November 30, 2015 and the Senate on June 9, 2015 (also unanimously).

The purpose of the Act is to require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) follow Congressional intent in administering directed appropriations to assist small and rural communities comply with federal environmental mandates.

The Act authorizes the EPA to provide technical assistance to small and rural communities to assist them with: (1) compliance with the myriad of federal regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act; (2) operation and maintenance of their water utilities; and (3) public health protection through the supply of safe public drinking water.

Technical Assistance Demand: Small and rural communities often have a difficult time, due to their limited customer base and technical capacities, providing safe water and complying with federal standards. This is compounded by the fact that small and rural communities often have lower median household incomes and higher water rates compared to larger communities. As a result, the cost of compliance is often dramatically higher per household.

The vast majority of U.S. drinking water supplies are small; 94 percent of community water systems serve a population of fewer than 10,000 people. Some communities are so small they rely on volunteers to operate their drinking water supply. Small communities in violation of the federal rules are subject to $25,000 per-day civil penalties.

We are urging Congress to fully fund the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act at the $15 million authorized level in the fiscal year 2017 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Act.

Experience: Since 1977, NRWA has assisted small communities in providing safe drinking water and ensure they have access to the expertise and technical assistance of an experienced technician they trust to teach them how to comply in a simple and affordable manner – and similarly, how to operate and maintain their treatment system.

Currently, the small and rural communities are struggling under new federal regulations, complex funding program applications, and continuing mandatory operator training requirements. Small and rural communities need help as soon as possible.