

**Environmentally Innovative Project Funded by the ARRA Green Project Reserve:  
Decentralized Sewage System Initiative for Potable Water Supply Source Protection,  
Surface Water Protection, and Compliance with EPA's Large Capacity Cesspool Ban**

**Background**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is seeking funding for a source water/ watershed protection initiative through upgrade and repair of decentralized sewage systems (DSS). The proposed project will be protective of the public health and environment while at the same time assist compliance with EPA's large capacity cesspool ban. A significant portion of the land in Connecticut is on public water supply watersheds or in aquifer protection areas. Decentralized sewage systems serve approximately 30% of Connecticut's population, and they are utilized in approximately 75% of the developed area of the state. DPH and EPA recognize that DSSs that are properly designed, sited and maintained can provide a long term/cost effective means of wastewater renovation/disposal that is protective of both public health and the environment. Outdated sewage systems (such as cesspools), failing or deficient DSSs in these areas, or in close proximity to potable water supply wells, represent a pollution concern, and correction or upgrade of these sewage systems is a source water protection measure.

**Large Capacity Cesspools**

Large capacity (LC) cesspools per EPA criteria include all cesspools other than those that serve single-family homes, or non-residential buildings serving fewer than 20 people per day. LC cesspools are governed under Connecticut's Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program. The UIC Program is governed by 40 CFR Part 124, 144, 145, 146, and Section 1421 of the Safe Drinking Water Act. EPA required all LC cesspools be abandoned by April 5, 2005. The DSS proposal will help subsidize the closure of LC cesspools in Connecticut, and will disseminate information statewide concerning the federal requirements requiring abandonment of LC cesspools.

**Proposal**

The DPH will issue a Circular Letter to all Local Health Departments and public water systems that have surface water supply watersheds or designated aquifer protection areas. DPH will request that Local Directors of Health notify their respective municipalities of the funding opportunity for replacement of LC cesspools, and for DSS upgrades near potable water supply wells. Public water systems and especially municipalities that are also public water companies will be encouraged to apply to DPH for this decentralized sewage system funding initiative.

The DPH's proposal would subsidize the repair and upgrade of the following decentralized sewage systems:

- Abandonment of LC cesspools. Funding will cover 50%, up to \$10,000, of the total cost of abandonment of the LC cesspool and installation of a replacement subsurface sewage disposal system installed under the provisions of Public Health Code Section 19-13-B103.
- Abandonment of cesspools on Public Water Supply watersheds, or in aquifer protection areas, or in close proximity of a potable water supply well or surface water body. Funding will cover 50%, up to \$10,000, of the total cost of abandonment of the cesspool

and installation of a replacement subsurface sewage disposal system installed under the provisions of Public Health Code Section 19-13-B103.

- Replacement/correction of any failed DSS on Public Water Supply watersheds, or in aquifer protection areas, or in close proximity of a potable water supply well or surface water body. Funding will cover 50%, up to \$10,000, of the total cost of the subsurface sewage disposal system repair completed under the provisions of Public Health Code Section 19-13-B103.
- Replacement/correction of any malfunctioning DSS on Public Water Supply watersheds, or in aquifer protection areas, or in close proximity of a potable water supply well or surface water body. Funding will cover 50%, up to \$10,000, of the total cost of the subsurface sewage disposal system repair completed under the provisions of Public Health Code Section 19-13-B103.

For the purposes of the above bulleted items, close proximity to a potable water supply well means within 500 feet of a public water supply well or within 150 feet of a private water supply well. For the purposes of the above bulleted items, close proximity to a surface water body means within 100 feet of an open watercourse. The cost for the installation of low flow water fixtures can be included in the total cost for the DSS upgrades on Public Water Supply watersheds, or in aquifer protection areas, or in close proximity of a potable water supply well or surface water body, if the repaired leaching system is substantially under-sized (< 50% ELA) or a concern for hydraulic overloading (< 50% MLSS). Funding will not be provided to any property that has public sewers available or is scheduled to be served by public sewers in the future. Funding will also not be provided to municipalities that are in the process of establishing a Decentralized Wastewater Management District.

The DPH will fulfill the department's administrative functions included in the provisions of Public Health Code Section 19-13-B103, and will work with Local Health Departments and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on efforts to comply with the LC cesspool ban. DEP has primacy for Connecticut's UIC program that is responsible for the LC cesspool abandonment program.

This decentralized sewage system proposal is intended to fulfill part or all of the ARRA Green Project Reserve. This initiative is environmentally innovative and would provide improved source water protection as well as environmental protection benefits. The project would also increase water efficiency by the installation of low flow water fixtures on sites with sewage systems of concern. Installation of low flow fixtures also reduces the potential for sewage system failure.