

SAND HILL ACRES: COMMUNITY SEPTIC

SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE | 2023-2025

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Sand Hill Acres is a manufactured home community in rural Sussex County, Delaware, home to approximately 600 residents, the majority of which speak a primary language other than English and have household incomes significantly below the statewide average.

Sand Hill's sanitary sewer services are provided by on-lot wastewater treatment and disposal systems consisting of septic tanks that discharge to drainfields, elevated sand mounds, or elevated peat mounds. These septic systems are aging, with most having exceeded their 30-year lifespan.

Signs of system failure include pooling wastewater effluent, sewer back ups, and frequent pump-outs. The presence of wastewater on the ground surface - including in and around areas where children play - is a health and safety concern for Sand Hill residents and the environment.

PROJECT SUMMARY

To address Sand Hill's wastewater infrastructure challenges, the Region 3 WaterTA team convened the community's management company, residents, representatives from Delaware state agencies, and other TA providers in a collaborative process to assess needs, investigate alternatives, and identify funding sources.

As part of this effort, the team secured services from the EPA WaterTA Engineering Support Team to assess existing conditions and evaluate potential alternatives. The engineers' onsite assessment found that many of the system's original drainfields were no longer functioning as designed, and that even previously-rehabilitated drainage systems were continuing to experience overflow issues.



SEPTIC TANK ACCESS HATCH SHOWING HIGH LIQUID LEVEL

The Region 3 WaterTA program helps Mid-Atlantic communities access funding to address water infrastructure needs. This program is coordinated by the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center and funded by US EPA.



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PROJECT SUMMARY (cont.)

Using findings from the onsite assessment, the engineering team identified and evaluated three potential solutions for Sand Hill Acres' failing wastewater system, providing a comprehensive analysis in a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER).

The WaterTA team presented these alternatives to the community at an in-person meeting, during which funding and financing options were also offered and discussed.

Drawing on recommendations presented in the PER as well as the community engagement process, Sand Hill Acres submitted a pre-application for a low-interest loan through the DWPCRF in February 2025, requesting \$5.4M to construct a community septic system. The project was placed on the DWPCRF Project Priority List.

If funded, this project would enable much-needed repairs and upgrades to the septic system, ensuring better protection of public health, provision of safe and reliable drinking water, and long-term cost savings for the community by replacing failing systems with a more sustainable solution.



LINED SEWAGE SPILL

KEY OUTCOMES

- **Alternatives analysis** for septic repair, replacement and/or disconnection along with a **Preliminary Engineering Report** for the identified preferred outcome
- **Community outreach** in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole: mailers, door-to-door visits and community meeting
- **Delaware Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund (DWPCRF) pre-application submitted** Feb 2025, for **\$5.4M** to construct a community septic system.
- Project placed on DWPCRF Project Priority List, making it eligible for potential funding through the Fund

NEXT STEPS

Near Term: If Sand Hill Acres' project is selected for DWPCRF funding, WaterTA Team will assist with assembly and submission of required application materials.

Long Term: Sand Hill Acres' new collection system could later be utilized to connect to a nearby wastewater treatment plant if this becomes a viable option in the future.



SAND HILL ACRES MOUND SYSTEM OVERFLOW

REGION 3 WATERTA PROJECT PARTNERS



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