
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Wastewater Consolidation Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Wastewater Consolidation Program?

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) recognize that improperly sited, designed, operated, and/or maintained onsite sewage treatment systems are a source of bacteria and nitrate pollution to surface water and groundwater and are impacting domestic groundwater supplies of communities throughout the Central Coast.

In 2018, Governor Brown signed SB 1215 into law, establishing funding and the regulatory framework for a statewide program to facilitate the consolidation of inadequate onsite sewage treatment systems with centralized wastewater treatment systems. SB 1215 modifies the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code Chapter 4.3, commencing with Section 13288) to authorize Regional Water Boards to encourage, and if necessary, mandate the provision of sewer service to eligible communities. This authority will be executed either through collaboration with local sewer providers or through enforcement orders to establish a timeline for connection to local sewer systems.

Who is eligible for the program?

The Wastewater Consolidation Program extends to all disadvantaged communities served by one or more inadequate onsite sewage treatment systems.

Eligible communities include, but are not limited to:

- Housing developments relying on aging individual septic systems
- Privately-owned communities such as mobile home parks
- Migrant housing centers
- California Native American Tribal Communities.

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Intended Use Plan (IUP) defines a small, severely disadvantaged community (SDAC) as a community with less than 20,000 people and a median household income (MHI) less than 60% of the statewide MHI. A small, disadvantaged community (DAC) is a community with less than 20,000 people and an MHI less than 80% of the statewide MHI.

Receiving sewer systems in partnership with DACs/SDACs may be eligible for funding through the Wastewater Consolidation Program. Funds awarded can be used by sewer service providers for various consolidation project costs including upgrades to their facilities to accommodate the additional flow and address compliance issues. Communities that do not have DAC status can also apply for funding through the CWSRF Program, but at this time only low interest loans may be available.

What is an onsite sewage treatment system? What is an inadequate system?

Onsite sewage treatment systems are a decentralized form of wastewater treatment designed to treat and dispose of wastewater on the same property where it is produced. Examples of onsite sewage treatment systems include, but are not limited to, septic tanks, cesspools, leach fields, and seepage pits.

Inadequate and aging or failed septic systems have been identified as a source of increased nitrate contamination in domestic water supply wells throughout the state. An onsite sewage treatment system is considered inadequate if it has the reasonable potential to cause a violation of applicable water quality objectives, impair present or future beneficial uses of water, or cause pollution, nuisance, or contamination of waters of the state (California Water Code Section 13288).

What is the scope of the Wastewater Consolidation Program enforcement authority?

Water Code Section 13289 provides the Regional Water Boards with discretionary enforcement authority to coordinate with local sewer providers for the expansion of sewer service to disadvantaged communities. State Water Board funding is available to the community and sewer providers to offset the costs associated with consolidation. Wherever possible, Regional Water Board staff will encourage voluntary consolidation as the most cost-effective approach to providing sewer service to disadvantaged communities. However, in situations where sewer providers are unwilling to voluntarily extend sewer services, Water Code Section 13289 authorizes the Regional Water Board to mandate the extension of sewer service to disadvantaged communities that are at or within a three-mile radius of a public or municipal receiving system. Time Schedule Orders or Cease and Desist Orders are examples of enforcement mechanisms that the Regional Water Boards can use to require a receiving sewer system to provide sewer service to a disadvantaged community.

Who should apply for funding?

Applicants are encouraged to contact the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance (DFA) as early on in the process as possible at DFA-OSWS@waterboards.ca.gov. Application materials are available here: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/srf/srf_forms.html

DFA continuously accepts applications. Additional information regarding the application process is available here: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/sustainable_water_solutions/scfp.html

Eligible applicants include: Public agencies having jurisdiction over disposal of sewage, industrial wastes, or other wastes, or an Indian tribe or an authorized Indian tribal organization, or a designated and approved management agency under Section 1288 of title 33 of the United States Code.

It is important to note that DFA cannot contract with private entities. Therefore, local receiving sewer service providers or agencies will likely serve as the applicant for consolidation projects. No matter who the

applicant is, DFA will want to look at the receiving sewer system's final information to verify that they can operate and maintain their system.

What funding is available for the program and how is it administered?

DFA administers funding for wastewater consolidation projects. Funding includes grants and low interest loans from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), Small Community Wastewater Program. Per the 2021-22 CWSRF Intended Use Plan (IUP), the maximum allowable grant for an individual consolidation project is \$10 million per community, up to \$75,000 per household connection.¹

DFA manages funding through a Financial Assistance Application process. Applicants can apply for different types of funding based on how far along they are in the process. There are different applications for planning/design or construction. In addition, technical assistance is available through DFA to assist in developing the required application materials for a planning/design or construction agreement. Note that planning and design costs can be reimbursed as part of a construction agreement and it is not necessary to apply for a separate planning/design grant if the project is ready to go straight to construction.

The Policy for Implementing the CWSRF can be found here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/srf/cwsrf_policy.html

The CWSRF IUP establishes grant eligibility and funding limits and is updated on an annual basis. The CWSRF IUP can be found here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/srf/pubs.html

For planning/design and construction projects, DFA will disburse funds after the project cost has been incurred and the funding recipient has submitted an associated invoice. DFA will typically release funds within 60 days of invoice receipt.

¹ The CWSRF IUP is subject to change from year to year. It is recommended that applicants check the latest CWSRF IUP for the most up to date maximum allowable grant for an individual consolidation project.

How do I apply for funding?

The applicant will submit the relevant application(s) using DFA's online Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST), which is available from the [FAAST webpage](https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/) (https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/).

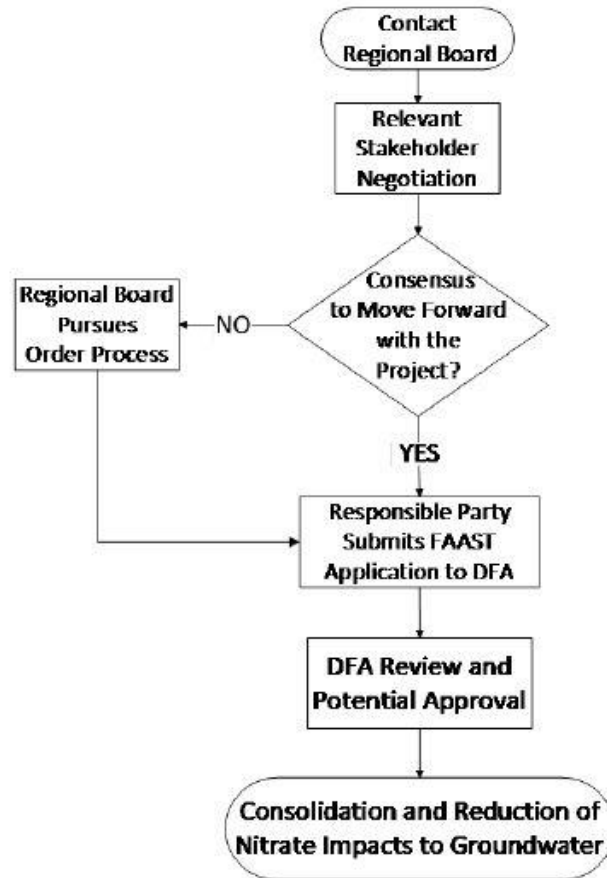
Upon approval, the applicant will be designated as the recipient for contracting all project tasks. It is important to note that DFA cannot contract with private entities. Therefore, local receiving sewer service providers or agencies will likely serve as the recipient for consolidation projects.

How do I begin the process of wastewater consolidation for my community?

Applicants can initiate the process by contacting the Wastewater Consolidation Program staff. Regional Water Board staff will then mediate negotiation among the relevant stakeholders. Regional Water Board staff will contact DFA to notify them of the incoming application. Simultaneously, the designated applicant/recipient (typically the receiving sewer system but may be the subsumed sewer system) will apply for funding using the FAAST tool. Upon receipt of the application, DFA will assign a project manager to review the application materials, including the scope of work and budget. The project manager will work with the applicant to facilitate approval and ensure completion of project requirements. Regional Water Board staff will be available to advocate for the project throughout the process.

If a consensus cannot be reached, Regional Water Board staff will issue an order to the receiving sewer system, requiring them to provide sewer service to the identified disadvantaged community. The receiving sewer system will still be eligible to apply for grant funding through DFA to defray costs associated with the provision of sewer service ordered by the Regional Water Board. Once a FAAST application is submitted, the process will continue as described in the previous paragraph.

The completion of approved sewer provision projects will result in the reduction of nitrate impacts to groundwater and the protection of sustainable drinking water. A flowchart of the WWC project from initial contact with the Regional Water Board to completion is found below.



Who can I contact for more information/to start the process?

The Wastewater Consolidation Program at the Central Coast Water Board has two designated staff. Program staff contact information is included below:

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