

WISP QUARTERLY

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Mountainside Community Cooperative's 4.3MM Water and Wastewater Upgrades are Fully Funded



Mountainside currently relies on an aging truck to haul wastewater to the Town of Camden Sewer Treatment Plant.

CAMDEN, Maine – When Mountainside Community Cooperative's \$4.3 million Water and Wastewater Project is complete, there's going to be a lot to notice, said Board President Margaret Jones.

Water leaks will stop. Electricity bills will decrease. The rusty truck that hauls sewage out of the community twice per day won't need to be replaced. The 50-year-old concrete holding tank for the community's sewage that has a \$30,000 crack in it won't be needed anymore so the repair won't need to be made.

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PRICE Program is Slow to Launch, But Notes on Some Next Steps Are Available

CDI is among 17 organizations awarded a PRICE grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), receiving nearly \$18 million to support infrastructure projects in resident-owned communities (ROCs) across New England and New York. PRICE, or the Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement, is a community development block grant program designed specifically for manufactured housing communities.

In addition to funding dozens of ROC infrastructure projects, PRICE funding will help CDI's WISP program hire additional staff to assist ROCs in securing further infrastructure funding. Although the PRICE program has faced delays, likely due to the transition between the Biden and Trump administrations, CDI is in contact with HUD and is working to establish systems to begin deploying the funds.

For those interested, notes and slides from the February 3rd presentation to ROCs are available upon request by emailing wisp@cdi.coop. CDI plans to host additional Q&A sessions for ROCs in the coming months as more information becomes available. Stay tuned for updates.

Article Highlights in This Issue

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- *Mountainside Water and Wastewater Project (ME)*
- *Homestead Acres Storm Water Project (VT)*
- *Tips to Extend the Life of Septic Systems*

Tips to Extend the Life of Your Community's Septic Systems

Replacing septic systems can be costly and may lead to higher lot rents. However, there are several affordable steps you and your community can take to extend the life of your systems, helping to save both money and avoid unnecessary headaches for everyone.

Regular Inspections - Your ROC should have a licensed contractor inspect your systems every 3-5 years, and pump the tank as needed, typically every 3-5 years

The 3 P's - Your systems will live a LOT longer if you follow the the "3 P's rule" and only flush:

- Pee
- Poo
- Paper

Do not flush the following items:

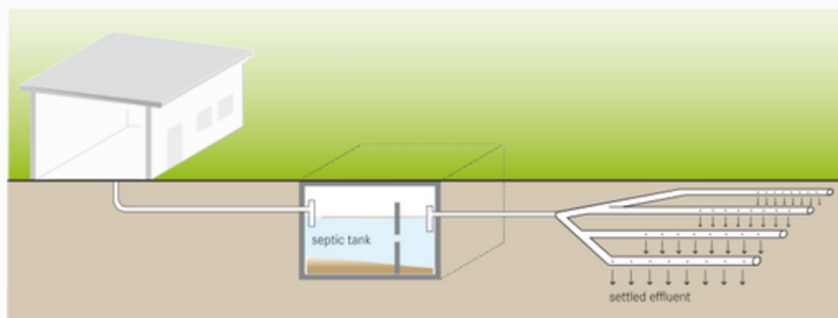
- cooking grease or oil
- coffee grounds
- household chemicals
- non-degradable products like wet wipes, cat litter, feminine hygiene products

Shield Your Field - Make sure your community knows where its leach fields are. Do not:

- Park or drive on the leach field. The weight can damage the drain lines.
- Plant trees or shrubs too close to the leach field as roots can grow into the system and clog it.

Stagger Your Water Use - Try to avoid using the shower, dishwasher, washing machine and toilet all at the same time if possible. Staggering water use will help your septic system better treat the water you flush down the drain.

Quickly Fix Water Leaks - leaking toilets and faucets can put a serious strain on your septic system. Be sure to fix plumbing leaks as quickly as possible.



Leach field diagram. Source: Wikipedia Creative Commons.

Infrastructure investments secure future for Homestead Acres ROC

ST. ALBANS, Vt. – There are 30 homes in Homestead Acres Cooperative, a resident owned community (ROC) in the northwest corner of Vermont about 65 miles south of Montreal, Canada.

In the spring, the 20 homeowners at the bottom of the sloping neighborhood experience annual flooding from melting snow and spring storms, creating repeated issues for two-thirds of the community.

"Every year they have to relevel their trailers because of the flooding and fix the skirting," said Board President Henry Benedict, who has lived at Homestead Acres for 36 years. "All of that water moved all the stones from their driveway into the grass so they would have to fix their driveways too. All of that costs close to \$1,000 each year for each home."

But those issues are now in the rearview mirror for homeowners thanks to help from WISP, which helped the community secure a \$199,940 grant through the America Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to install stormwater infrastructure, including some under the road as well as grading the road and land. **Continued on page 3**



Catch basins installed in the middle of Homestead Acres' roadway.

Mountainside Community Cooperative's 4.3MM Water and Wastewater Upgrades are Fully Funded

Continued from page 1. "The truck is truly on its last legs," Jones said. "If we weren't connecting to the city sewer system, we would have to get a new truck. And we have been able to secure the funding because of WISP. It's an amazing program, and I know we are not the only park to benefit. WISP should be available to everyone across the country."

Mountainside Community Cooperative has a unique set of needs. Because it does not tie into Camden's sewer system, a tanker truck pumps sewage from a 26,000-gallon concrete holding tank every day, and then a driver hauls it nearly three miles to a wastewater facility in town. The truck is more than 15 years old, is starting to rust and the driver who has been hauling the sewage since before Mountainside became a resident owned community or ROC in 2019 is unable to drive. Additionally, the holding tank is 50 years old and two decades past its prime.

Mountainside Community Cooperative is undertaking both a water and wastewater project. The total cost is \$4,303,369. The wastewater project is being handled by the Town of Camden, with WISP providing a supporting/coaching role.

The drinking water project is being managed through CDI/WISP. Funding for that project comes from the following sources:

- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF): \$752,198
- American Rescue Plan Act (in the form of grant funding): \$919,352

The Wastewater project is receiving funding through:

- Housing and Urban Development Community Block Grant Program (HUD-CDBG) through the Town of Camden): \$1 million
- A Congressionally Directed Spending Award (through CDI): \$1.31 million
- Town of Camden: \$321,819
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Mountainside is also included in the CDI PRICE project list for around \$200,000 as a back-up should there be cost overruns. Both projects should be completed by the end of 2026.

"The co-op is a crucial and highly desirable source of affordable housing for Camden but the current condition of its infrastructure puts the community in a precarious position until these upgrades are made," said Jeremiah Ward, Program Director for WISP.

"Fortunately, Mountainside's Board has raised a lot of awareness about the need for their project and the need for investment in ROCs in general at the state, local and federal level. This, combined with technical support with funding applications and project planning provided by WISP, has ensured that their projects are fully funded. The Board's hard work on these projects won't just benefit current and future Mountainside residents, ROCs across the country stand to benefit as well because Mountainside is already being looked at as an example of how to do infrastructure redevelopment in a manufactured housing community."

Infrastructure investments secure future for Homestead Acres ROC

Continued from page 2. Homestead Acres is WISP's first "post-construction" client. This community is different from the other WISP clients because it's wrapping up its last infrastructure project. Over the years, the community has completed multiple projects, including completing significant wastewater upgrades such as installing a new pump station, a leach field system and a backup generator for the whole system, said Annik Paul, WISP Program Associate.

Without this stormwater project, the newly installed wastewater pump station that was also located at the bottom of the slope would flood whenever heavy rain occurred, so it was crucial they get this work completed, according to Paul and Jeremiah Ward, Program Director for WISP.

"WISP is proud to have supported the completion of the stormwater infrastructure upgrades at Homestead Acres MHC," Ward said. "This project will greatly increase the co-op's environmental resiliency and protect residents' yards and the community's sewer pump station from flooding in the future. As the project wraps up in Spring 2025, the focus will shift to maintaining and optimizing the water, wastewater, and stormwater systems to ensure they continue to meet the needs of Homestead's residents for years to come."

With the work nearly completed, Benedict said the community, which became a ROC in December 2011, is already noticing a difference. "We had a couple of good heavy rainstorms last spring and in November and the water did what it was supposed to do and that area and those yards stayed dry," Benedict said.

Benedict said he is grateful for the support of WISP and the money it will save homeowners at Homestead Acres. "It is a relief," he said. "Because the amount of money we have spent over the last 12 years to fix these issues that keep happening probably cost us three times what it cost to put the drainage system in."

About WISP

CDI has worked with manufactured homeowners across New England since 2009, helping them cooperative purchase and democratically manage their neighborhoods. CDI's Water Infrastructure Program (WISP) helps both resident- and non-profit-owned communities access funding to build safe and reliable water and wastewater infrastructure.

Manufactured-home communities are an essential source of affordable housing for New England. But often their infrastructure is at the end of its useful lifespan, so major investment is needed to sustain these affordable communities for the long term.

WISP bridges the gap between the water infrastructure funding world, traditionally geared toward municipalities, and Manufactured-home communities. This program provides FREE technical and managerial support to connect eligible Manufactured-home communities across New England and New York with available funding sources, including from the USDA Rural Development agency.

Discover the inspiring work WISP is doing and learn how they're trans-forming communities—visit cdi.coop/wisp to read more!



Jeremiah Ward is Director of CDI's WISP Program. Before taking the lead on WISP, Jeremiah served as a Cooperative Development Specialist in CDI's New England Resident-Owned Communities (NEROC) Program for 12 years. He has managed several resident-owned community acquisitions and is skilled at both managing the highly technical real estate development work that is required to raise millions in acquisition financing and funding and adept at resident organizing. Prior to working with CDI, Jeremiah earned an M.A. in Community Development and Planning from Clark University.

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Annik Paul is a Program Associate with CDI's WISP Program. Prior to joining WISP, Annik held many roles while working in the manufactured housing sector including advocating for residents rights, providing pre- and post-purchase technical assistance to resident owned communities, and supportive roles such as team manager. Prior to joining CDI, Annik worked as a Relationship Manager for ROC USA. She is passionate about preserving affordable housing. Annik holds a Master's degree in Sustainable Development from SIT Graduate Institute and a Bachelor's in Accounting and Finance from Worcester State University.

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Nate Goldman started as an Associate with CDI's WISP Program team in September 2024. He came to CDI with a background in building construction trades, beginning as a carpenter in 1985 and filling many other roles over the years as a project supervisor, estimator, safety program manager and senior project manager. Throughout his career, he gained experience coordinating complex building projects with a high level of communication and collaboration. Nate has had a long-standing awareness of housing insecurity and homelessness in Vermont, where he has lent a hand through volunteering in the community.

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Stephen Belcher is an Associate for CDI's WISP Program. He supports the program's administrative needs including data collection, grant applications, and grant reporting. Prior to CDI, Stephen worked as the Operations Manager for the North Country Food Co-op in Plattsburg, New York. During his time there, he helped oversee \$2 million a year in sales, helped optimize data systems and margins, and coordinated efforts to bring in community-based programs to the store. Stephen graduated from the State University of New York with a double major in English Literature and Philosophy.

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