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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW PROGRAM PROVIDES LOANS TO HOMEOWNERS FOR SEPTIC TANK REPAIRS

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) is implementing a new program to assist homeowners seeking to repair failing septic tanks. Qualifying homeowners may receive up to \$4,000 for repairing existing septic systems.

Homeowners must meet two criteria to qualify for a loan. Loan applicants must live within a water supply watershed or one half mile of a targeted stream or lake to quality. Targeted waters include Clark Creek, Lower Creek, Lake James, Lake Rhodhiss, Lake Lookout Shoals and parts of Lake Hickory. Although eligibility is also based on household income, most Unifour families would financially qualify for this program.

Individuals seeking assistance for replacing straight piping of wastes with a septic system are also eligible for loans regardless of where they live within the region. Straight piping is a term that refers to discharging untreated wastewater via a pipe directly to a ditch or stream.

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Septic systems are designed to remove and break down contaminants contained in sewage, bath and dishwater before entering the groundwater. When these pollutants are not treated properly, wastewater can contaminate nearby wells, lakes and streams. Untreated wastewater may contain dangerous viruses and bacteria that can also threaten human health.

Signs that a septic system may not be operating properly include wastewater appearing on the surface of the ground near the system, lush, green grass growing over the drainfield, even during dry weather, sewage backing up into a toilet or tub, and slowly draining fixtures.

Funding for the Unifour Septic Tank Repair Program is being provided by the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund. “The high concentration of septic tanks throughout the Unifour region was a primary reason why this program was developed,” said Mike Struve, Water Quality Administrator at the WPCOG. “Over time, we believe this program will assist a large number of people in our region because many homeowners would otherwise be unable to afford spending several thousand dollars for these repairs” Struve noted.

According to the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 63% of households in the Unifour rely on septic tanks for treating domestic wastewater.

Before repair work can begin homeowners must obtain a septic tank repair permit from their County Environmental Health Department.

Qualifying individuals may borrow up to \$4,000 to repair or replace existing septic systems. Loan monies may also be used to pay for other repair work required by the County as specified on the repair permit. Loans must be repaid within five years at 5% interest. At least one payment of principal and interest must be made monthly.

For additional information about the program, contact Mike Struve of the WPCOG at 322-9191, extension 148.

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