



St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission

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California, MD.

Collaborative Effort Yields Dividends for Failing Septic Systems in Breton Bay

The St. Clements Shores Waste Water Treatment Plant (“St. Clements WWTP”) became operational in December, 1982 with the primary purpose of alleviating health hazard conditions in the St. Clements Shores Subdivision created by failing septic systems. Additional capacity was provided in 2000 to enable owners of certain undeveloped lots in St. Clements Shores to utilize their property. The current permitted capacity of the plant is 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) putting the plant at or near capacity. Although an upgrade to the plant is under design and construction funding is programmed for FY 2021, the St. Mary's County Health Department had identified five (5) existing homes with septic systems determined to be in a state of critical failure with limited options to dispose of household sewerage. Unfortunately, the cost to connect can be expensive and often prohibitive the farther an existing home is from an existing public sewer.

In order to assist these residents, the St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission (“MetCom”), initiated an innovative pilot treatment and disposal project (the Bioweb sludge system) at the plant. Bioweb was able to achieve a much higher total nitrogen treatment level of 8 milligrams per liter, which was 60% lower than levels allowed in the Maryland Department of the Environment (“MDE”) permit. Working closely with MDE for approval of this enhanced and improved level of treatment, known as Biological Nutrient Removal (“BNR”), a revised permit was obtained by MetCom in May 2019, allowing Bay Restoration Funds (“BRF”) to be available to these property owners for their individual connections to public sewer. “This was a very big win for the Health Department, MetCom, MDE, and the Commissioners of St. Mary's County as all five (5) of the failing systems are now connected or are in the process of connecting to public sewer” stated George Erichsen, MetCom's Executive Director. In fact, one property was able to utilize MetCom's new Residential Connection Incentive Loan Program to supplement the BRF grant funding.

What is Bay Restoration Funding? Grant assistance to residential and commercial properties is available through the Health Department. Residential connections may be eligible for up to \$20,000 per residence to assist in connecting to a

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St. Mary's County Health Department
Bay Restoration Grant Program

public sewer system. In addition, any property owner that utilizes an on-site sewage disposal system may be eligible for a grant. Unlike a loan, a grant does not have to be paid back. Small businesses can also receive up to 75% in grant funding toward the upgrade of their On-site Sewer Disposal System (“OSDS”) with Best Available Technology (“BAT”), or funding toward a connection to the established public sewer. In the case of connections to public sewer, the grant will be awarded for 75% of eligible costs up to \$15,000. For those that do not qualify as a small business, they will continue to receive a sewer connection grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to \$10,000. To see if you qualify, contact the St. Mary's County Health Department at 301.475.4321 or see www.smchd.org and click on “Bay Restoration Grant Application.” Or you may visit the St. Mary's County Health Department, Division of Environmental Health at 21580 Peabody Street, Leonardtown, MD to pick up an application.

MetCom can also help with financing your connection to public sewer or water. In addition to the Health Department grant funding, MetCom offers a voluntary Residential Connection Incentive Loan Program to assist owners of existing residential properties currently served by septic and/or well systems, with all or a portion of the costs of connecting to available public sewer and water systems. A property owner may have a failed septic system, property that cannot pass a percolation test, may not have sufficient open space to add a new drainage field, may have a contaminated well, or may simply want the convenience and security of connection to the public system. Limited funding is available on a first come, first served basis through a \$250,000 operating revolving loan fund to provide combined loans of up to \$25,000 per property. Longer term payback periods (i.e. up to 10 years) may also be available for individuals / households that meet certain financial eligibility criteria. To see if you qualify, contact MetCom at 301.737.7400 or visit our website at <https://www.metcom.org/>, click on “Forms & Applications” or “Connection Incentive Programs” under the Fiscal Tab. You may also visit the Engineering Department at 23121 Camden Way, California MD to pick up an application.

With the funding opportunities now available for connections to public sewer and water, it is hoped that citizens will consider becoming a MetCom customer and can take advantage of one or more of these programs. If you are already a customer, we would ask that you share it with a neighbor or someone else that you feel might benefit. In the interim, please do not hesitate to contact MetCom at engineering@metcom.org or Ms. Heather Moritz, Deputy Director of Environmental Health at heather.moritz@maryland.gov if you have any questions.

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