

**Johnson County, Kansas, Comments Concerning Local Environmental Protection Program Funding  
October 9, 2012**

Contact:

Todd Rogers, Onsite Program Manager  
Johnson County Department of Health & Environment  
11811 South Sunset Drive, Suite 2700  
Olathe, Kansas 66061  
913-715-6900

The Government of Johnson County, Kansas, urges the Kansas Legislative Budget Committee to consider reinstating funding for the Local Environmental Protection Program (LEPP) in FY 2014. The work that LEPP supports at the local level has significant implications for public health and environmental quality in Johnson County.

Johnson County adopted its existing Environmental Sanitary Code (ESC) in 1994, around the same time that the county started receiving LEPP funds. The code was written to help bolster the on-site sewage treatment program and to develop a swimming pool inspection program. The commercial industrial inspection program was also started at that time, and LEPP funding made it possible for the County to hire new inspector help with the increasing inspection workload.

In 2004 Johnson County revised its ESC to require onsite septic system inspections of properties during real estate transactions. This requirement created major strains for onsite staff resources at that time. The real estate slowdown that occurred over the last four to five years helped alleviate some of the pressure on staff. In late 2011, the County enacted a voluntary retirement plan that resulted in the departure of one of the on-site inspectors. With dwindling LEPP funds and a lack of new construction permits, the County left the position vacant.

At this time, Johnson County's onsite sewage treatment staff is barely able to keep up with program demands. As the US economy continues to rebound, the increasing inspection workload will be difficult to meet with existing resources. The LEPP grant provided vital support to a program that strives to be a leader in the onsite sewage treatment field in the State of Kansas. Johnson County has a large suburban population with high density housing, and the potential for impacts to the environment and public health are far greater than less densely populated rural areas. Johnson County has approximately 10,000 septic systems in use and most of those are in densely-populated subdivisions. A lack of resources in on-site sewage treatment programs can lead to contamination of waterways and potentially higher rates of water-borne diseases.

Smaller communities who rely on LEPP funding have been hurt as well. Many Counties around the State are in jeopardy of losing their on-site sewage treatment programs altogether. In many areas LEPP funding was the major source of revenue which kept the programs running. With the loss of LEPP funding, the environmental health field has taken a step backwards. The valuable work that is done statewide by these sanitarians is vital for the health and safety of the public and the protection of the environment, and it deserves to be properly funded by the State of Kansas.