

Septic Renovation Water Quality Initiative (SRWQI)

2026 Frequently Asked Questions

Does the NDDEQ provide money directly to homeowners?

No. The NDDEQ provides funding to the local project sponsor. The local project sponsor administers the local program, works with property owners, verifies completed renovations, and issues rebate payments. The NDDEQ then reimburses the local project sponsor after reviewing the required documentation.

Who can apply for the SRWQI?

Eligible local project sponsors include local governments, joint powers boards, and nonprofit organizations with a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through SAM.gov. The local project sponsor will enter into rebate contracts with individual property owners within their defined Local Project boundary.

Is SRWQI funding available statewide?

Yes. Local projects may be proposed in any area of North Dakota, but the project must establish a defined local project boundary and focus septic renovation assistance where there is a water-quality benefit. Eligible systems generally must be adjacent to or within one mile of a North Dakota named and classified waterbody, impaired waterbody, or located above a designated sensitive aquifer.

Does a Local Project boundary have to follow county or other political boundaries?

No. Project boundaries should be based on logical planning units such as watershed boundaries, hydrologic features, community service areas, or other defined geographic areas. A watershed-based boundary is often appropriate, particularly when addressing an impaired or threatened waterbody; applicants should consider the area where septic system renovations contribute to water quality protection and restoration.

Does the property owner have to pay anything up front?

Yes. The SRWQI is structured as a **rebate**. The property owner is responsible for payments, deposits, and other financial obligations associated with the septic renovation. The local project sponsor issues the rebate after the renovation is completed and the required documentation has been verified.

Can work begin before the homeowner signs the rebate agreement?

No. A fully executed Property Owner Rebate Contract (between the local project sponsor and the property owner) must be in place before any portion of the septic renovation begins. Costs incurred before the contract is fully executed are not eligible for reimbursement.

Does the septic renovation still need to go through the normal permitting process?

Yes. Septic renovations must comply with North Dakota Administrative Code and applicable Local Public Health Unit requirements, including permitting, system design approval, and final inspection.

Additionally, all proposed septic renovations must receive a determination of no adverse effects from the North Dakota Historic Preservation Office.

Can a local project sponsor include funding for grant administration?

Yes. Local project sponsors may include up to the 15% de minimis indirect cost rate for grant administration, unless the organization has another negotiated indirect cost rate.

What can the NDDEQ help applicants with?

- Application development – Review draft applications and provide feedback before submission.
- Project boundary and prioritization – Provide guidance on defining a water-quality-focused project area and identifying appropriate SRWQI focus areas.
- Eligibility questions – Help clarify SRWQI eligibility requirements for individual septic systems and proposed projects.
- Water-quality information – Help identify relevant impaired or threatened waters, watershed information, and other information that can support project prioritization.
- Mapping – Provide access to the SRWQI mapping tools used to identify the one-mile waterbody buffer and designated sensitive aquifer areas.
- Local Public Health Unit coordination – Help sponsors understand the role of the applicable LPHU and coordinate as needed to address permitting and regulatory requirements.
- Cultural resources review – Assist sponsors with coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and determining the appropriate level of review.
- Program administration – Provide guidance on SRWQI requirements, reimbursement documentation, and use of the NPS Database System.
- General technical assistance – Answer questions about implementing the SRWQI and help sponsors navigate applicable state and federal requirements.

For questions or assistance with the 2026 application, contact Liz Smith at (701) 328-7371 or ecsmith@nd.gov.