



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Mike Flenniken  
(909) 937-9642  
[info@iwsh.org](mailto:info@iwsh.org)

**IWSH Joins Alabama in Fight Against Poor Sanitation and 'America's Dirty Secret'**

*Innovative public/private collaboration aims to stop flow of raw sewage into backyards  
of more than 175 disadvantaged households over the next two years*

**Washington, D.C. (Feb. 23, 2022)** — The International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation (IWSH), the philanthropic arm of the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO®), is set to launch a new Community Plumbing Challenge™ (CPC) program in Alabama to combat one of America's most critical sanitation challenges. The project will be carried out in collaboration with the Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program (BBUWP), Alabama Department of Public Health, and LIXIL, a global manufacturer of pioneering water and housing products.

This pilot CPC event is scheduled for March 14-18 in Lowndes County, Alabama. The weeklong project will provide plumbing repairs and upgrades for five homes and develop a framework for ongoing plumbing industry support to the BBUWP.

The Black Belt region is traditionally defined as a set of 17 counties in the south-central part of Alabama, and many of these counties — including Lowndes — have high concentrations of Black Prairie soil, which is virtually nonabsorbent and poses problems for on-site sewage systems. Poverty is rampant in the region, and many low-income homeowners are unable to afford an on-site sewage disposal system, instead resorting to straight piping, which releases sewage above ground. BBUWP estimates that 70-80 percent of all rural households in the region have failing or nonexistent wastewater systems. The dire situation was recently featured on a "60 Minutes Investigates" segment titled "America's Dirty Secret."

The BBUWP was created to increase accessibility of proper on-site wastewater disposal resources, and the program installs and repairs on-site wastewater systems with the help of partners and donors such as IWSH and LIXIL. In addition to introducing innovative technologies, the program also creates a sustainable program for the ongoing operation and maintenance of these systems. The program aims to service 175 homes over the next two years.

"I am very pleased that IWSH is partnering with the BBUWP in this much-needed project," said Sherry Bradley, director of the Alabama Department of Public Health's Bureau of Environmental Services. "Because of IWSH, applicants are receiving low-water-use fixtures that are vital for the proper functioning of on-site septic tank systems in Black Belt soils by reducing the amount of effluent going into the soils. This participation is much needed and appreciated not only by BBUWP but the people receiving the service."

LIXIL will donate septic systems to the project, and Fuji Clean USA, a company specializing in wastewater treatment technologies, will contribute on-site water treatment systems.

"At LIXIL, we are committed to collaborating with academic, government and private-sector partners to develop sanitation solutions to improve the lives of residents of Lowndes County," said Troy Benavidez, leader of Government Relations and Policy for LIXIL. "Together we can provide technologically advanced sanitation systems that are designed to overcome environmental challenges in the region. We also recognize the role skilled plumbers play in safe installation of sanitation solutions in communities and hence have been longtime partners of IWSH in their efforts. We are very



**The International Water, Sanitation  
and Hygiene Foundation**

Phone: +1 844 497 4674 | [info@iwsh.org](mailto:info@iwsh.org)  
101 Constitution Avenue, NW Suite 825 East  
Washington, D.C. 20001

excited about the Lowndes County initiative/CPC and are proud to have donated water-efficient products to this effort.”

IWSH is actively looking for plumbers, electricians and carpenters who are licensed in the state of Alabama to participate in the March 14-18 CPC. To volunteer or for more information, please contact IWSH North American Program Director Jed Scheuermann at [jed.scheuermann@iapmo.org](mailto:jed.scheuermann@iapmo.org).

Visit <https://www.bbuwp.org/> to learn more about the Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program.

Visit [www.iwsh.org/iwsh/our-work/n-america/us](http://www.iwsh.org/iwsh/our-work/n-america/us) to learn more about IWSH work in the United States.

# # #

*The International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation (IWSH) is the philanthropic arm of the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO®). For more information, visit [www.iwsh.org](http://www.iwsh.org).*