

Mayor's Report on Water Stewardship Part 3- Harvesting

Rainwater harvesting, both large and small scale- is a subject which has great appeal to Arizonans. Most of us have watched the flood waters race down the streets and washes and wished that those same massive volumes of water could be contained and re-used during the drier months of the year.

Unfortunately, even on a micro scale the economics of utilizing all of the water that falls on one's rooftop in a year could be prohibitive. Since rainfall in Arizona is neither steady nor predictable, sufficient storage for all the water harvested during the monsoon season could be far more expensive than most residents are willing to pay.

Far more cost effective is the idea of purchasing whatever storage tank one is able to afford, then piping the harvested water to an area where that water is most efficiently utilized. By gravity feeding the water to various drought-resistant plants, one can get the most out of a summer downpour with a minimal investment.

On a larger scale, municipal rainwater harvesting takes on some even greater challenges (such as environmental concerns, funding for such large scale projects, and citizen concerns regarding such items as standing water and threats to water quality). The concept of simply building an earthen dam across a wash to capture sheet flooding, letting the sediment settle out of the water, testing the water to ensure water quality, and then using that water to recharge the aquifer seems to be fairly straightforward at first glance. Unfortunately, once we add in several governmental agencies, a half-dozen citizen groups and a lawyer or two, what once was a simple solution can become an endless tangle of red tape.

Here in Chino Valley, we have identified several sheet flooding areas and possible locations for settling ponds to begin the large-scale harvesting process. Maybe in the years to come we will be able to recover and re-use some of these gentle summer rains that we have come to love so much. I just hope the red tape doesn't plug up the drains...

Chris Marley, Mayor of Chino Valley