

## Merrill, Hannah

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**From:** pearl hewett [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, July 22, 2011 9:03 AM  
**To:** zSMP  
**Subject:** Fw: WIRA 2 illegal to harvest rainwater

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [pearl hewett](#)  
**To:** [earnest spees](#) ; [Jo Anne Estes](#) ; [pat tenhulzen](#)  
**Cc:** [Katie Krueger](#)  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 21, 2011 9:19 AM  
**Subject:** WIRA 2 illegal to harvest rainwater

Please add this as my comment for the SMP Update

To Whom It May Concern

A brief news report on Fox News 13 on water harvesting caught my attention.

### **I went on line and found the following information on WRIA 2**

Fact or Fiction, It is illegal to collect water in a rain barrel?

The State owns all rainwater?

**All waters of the state, including RAINWATER,**

**require a water right in order to be put to beneficial use**

**Ecology is not willing to make the use of rainwater exempt from the permit process.**

**Bills have been introduced in the state legislature to allow an exemption for limited rainwater**

**harvesting, but have failed to date to generate sufficient interest to allow passage**

Is this what will happen in Sequim?

Pearl Rains Hewett

Trustee George C. Rains Sr Trust

Invited Committee member

Read on if you are interested.

## **Rainwater harvesting**

### **San Juan County Water Resource Management Plan WRIA 2**

San Juan County residents have long used **rainwater catchment (or harvesting)** as a means of supplementing limited groundwater supplies. This practice was officially incorporated into county code in 1998. However, **all waters of the state, including rainwater, require a water right in order to be put to beneficial use. This requirement puts county practice and code in conflict with state law.** Efforts to resolve this issue as an early implementation project were initially frustrating, due to statewide concerns and hopes for a legislative bill to address the issue. Eventually, **the WRMC and Ecology agreed to the recommendation to pursue a general permit for use of rainwater harvesting county-wide.** The documentation to support this permit is contained in Appendix B, Rainwater catchment analysis.

Lopez Village

**Rainwater use,** wastewater reuse, desalinization and hauled water

**Rainwater catchment In an area with limited water resources, the capture of rainfall is a practical approach**

**to providing water for irrigation and individual domestic use. This practice has been used**

**for decades in San Juan County, especially in the form of pond catchment on farms. It has been an official policy in San Juan County to allow rainwater systems as a source of water for individual domestic use for over a decade. This use of rainwater, however,**

requires a water right permit, just like any other water source.

In 1999, Ecology issued a preliminary/temporary permit authorizing the collection and

use of rainwater for non-potable use to Camp Nor'wester on Johns Island, stating: "The

location and geology of the San Juan Islands create an area of limited surface and

ground water supply. Your proposal presents a unique opportunity to test the feasibility

of rainwater collection as an alternative source of potable water supply." In May, 2001,

the San Juan County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution requesting that

Ecology to set a policy that would make rainwater use exempt from the requirement for a water right permit, similar to their policy for the use of seawater. Because of state \_\_\_\_\_

wide implications, **Ecology is not willing to make the use of rainwater exempt** from the permit process, but has proposed a general county-wide permit, with an allocation set aside for rainwater harvesting by sub-area. Currently, use of rain barrels to promote water conservation is a common practice state-wide, and several counties allow the use of rainwater for potable and/or non-potable use, including King County. **Bills have been introduced in the state legislature to allow an exemption for limited rainwater harvesting, but have failed to date to generate sufficient interest to allow passage.** This plan recommends following through with the general permit process in order to make rainwater use a realistic alternative in water-poor areas and continued efforts to develop legislation.

Rooftop collections systems are considered a surface water source for purposes of determining appropriate water quality treatment and monitoring requirements. For

**individuals using catchment systems, ongoing maintenance is essential to assure safety. Group A and B water systems with households also using catchment systems, must protect their distribution system from potential cross-connections. (See Appendix B, Rainwater catchment analysis)**