



Article Reprint from

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The View from Laughing Springs: Hans Reimann's ecological notes

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Storm Water Conservation

Our long, hot, and dry summer has given way to an autumn disguised as a rainy season. During the last few weeks of summer, as the time of daylight shortened and met the incremental increase of nighttime, the autumnal equinox arrived. This celestial event is one of our own earthly planetary events that goes unrecognized in most "modern" cultures. But it seems that human activities may have now influenced the way in which weather patterns interact with increasing and decreasing daylight. Our own little corner of North America, the Cooks Creek watershed, is under the influence, of gaseous omissions that have nothing to do with the carbon dioxide cycle. In nature, carbon dioxide concentration cycles are now documented as having fluctuated to extremes many times in our home planet's life. What has never happened before is the mix of man-made compounds escaping as gases into our air. A more significant fact is that a concentration of those emissions is in our own vaunted Northeastern corridor of the USA.

With a great deal of native diversity, a relatively clean stream system, and a human population becoming more aware of their impact, inhabiting the watershed, I have faith that people are willing to learn more about how to adapt. For instance, the water we share should be the base for conservation of the native diversity here in our watershed. One of the best ways to set an example for other people in other watersheds, as well as our own, is conserving storm water.

We can learn to think of storm water as a resource. You have heard and read about riparian buffers along our ponds and waterways, the vegetation slowing and filtering storm water, shielding the water temperature and providing wildlife corridors. The next logical primer on storm water returns to the source of the human impact on rainfall: water picks up speed running off of our roofs, patios, driveways and roads. Rain gardens and other native plantings slow and filter the runoff, giving rainwater a chance to filter back into our aquifers. Most of us, in this watershed, interact with the land we pay taxes on, by cutting the lawn, gardening, or just having an outdoor barbecue. But another very positive way to interact with your land could be to conserve some rainwater before it runs off into a street or storm drain; floods a low lying area or reaches a stream so quickly and in such volume that stream banks erode needlessly. In addition, fast running water can also pick up harmful debris and chemicals on the way to the stream from your property.

Conserving rainwater (storm water runoff) by installing rain barrels can help mitigate these storm events. Rain barrels are not a new idea, and can be an easy and inexpensive lifestyle choice folks can implement. I have found that using a 55 gallon

rain barrel to conserve the initial surge of storm water off a roof and then allowing the overflow to drain into a rain garden of native plants is a great conservation combination. We are thinking about hosting a rain barrel workshop with the Saucon Creek Watershed Association. Is any one interested in constructing their own fully functional rain barrel? Give us your thoughts, share in this community idea.

Regards, Hans O. Reimann Jr.