



“Lakespert” – Rain Harvesting, 55 Gallons at a Time

Steve Lundt, CLM

A small effort I have been involved with over the years is helping homeowners install rain barrels. My goal is to get watershed residents to better understand the connectivity of their rooftops to downstream lakes.

So, I have become the “Barrel Guy.” I have made a connection with the local Coca-Cola production plant where I frequently pick up used 55-gallon, food-grade barrels. These white, plastic barrels once held the sweet, dark secrets to classic coke. After a good rinse, their second life continues locally as a rain barrel. Instead of discarding them, Coco-Cola has gladly teamed up with local rain harvesting efforts across the country to repurpose their barrels.

A handful of non-profit, watershed-friendly organizations then come to me in the spring asking for 50+ barrels at a time for their rain barrel workshops. This has been going on since 2016 when the state of Colorado first legalized rain harvesting. With just 14 inches of rain on the populated east side of the Rockies, water scarcity finally moved the political needle to allow for rain harvesting. The law states that only individual homes can collect roof runoff with a maximum of two 55-gallon barrels. All harvested rainwater is for outside use, not for consumption, and not considered a water right. This is just a small taste of our arid, western water laws.

I figure this small, grassroots effort to conserve water can also have a positive impact on watershed health and water quality. I enjoy seeing people realize that they play a key role in the water cycle, especially in the city where people tend to over trust bottled water, have no clue where their drain leads to, or do not know where their coffee water comes from.

This small thing – being the “Barrel Guy” – can seem odd and a bit out of place for this Lakespert, but it feels good to be a part of a bigger effort. I like to think that small nutrient load reductions are happening each time it rains because of these barrels.

It just takes the smallest stone to make an ever-expanding ripple. Each barrel that I have handed out will have a positive impact for years to come.



Getting ready for the rain barrel workshop season this spring by stocking up on used barrels from Coca-Cola.

Steve Lundt, Certified Lake Manager, has monitored and worked to improve water quality at Barr Lake (Denver, Colorado) for over 20 years. Steve is active with the Colorado Lake & Reservoir Management Association and is a past Region 8 director for NALMS and an active member since 1998. *

