

# Water Quality Protection Means the World

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## Porter County Recycling & Waste Reduction

### Community Rain Barrel Program

#### Introduction

We all live in a watershed. A watershed is the area of land that drains to a specific waterbody whether it is a lake, stream or even wetland. Eventually the precipitation that falls on land will drain to nearby waters through a watershed. Watersheds are separated from other watersheds by high land points such as hills and slopes.

Watersheds are everywhere. Homes, school parking lots and even local parks play a role in adding water to local ditches, creeks, streams, rivers and lakes. For example, Sunset Hill Farm County Park in Valparaiso, Ind., is part of the Salt Creek Watershed, a subwatershed of the Lake Michigan watershed. Any precipitation that falls on the land at the park is eventually carried into Salt Creek and ultimately into Lake Michigan. And, as the rain runs off the land, it can pick up pollutants in the watershed, including trash, oils, fertilizers and pesticides.

Porter County is home to two main watersheds; the Lake Michigan Watershed and the Kankakee River Basin Watershed. These watersheds include all the land that drains into ditches, creeks, streams and rivers that empty into the lake or river.

#### Protecting our Watersheds

As we develop our land and increase the amount of paved surfaces and buildings (known as impervious cover), the water cycle is changed. As impervious surfaces increase, the problems associated with stormwater quality also increase. Less rainfall and snowmelt sinks into the ground and more water flows rapidly over the land into our watersheds and ultimately Lake Michigan or the Kankakee River. Stormwater can contain pollutants such as sediment, nutrients, bacteria, trash, oils, fertilizers and pesticides. Conventional methods of land development collect and convey stormwater quickly into a series of drains and pipes that flow directly into the closest waterbody in our watersheds with little or no water quality treatment.

Porter County organizations and citizens can help protect our watersheds by installing rain barrels, one of the easiest and most cost effective methods for conserving water and improving water quality. Rain barrels collect water from rooftops and store it for later use. Installing a rain barrel can reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and improve water quality in our watersheds. Diverting runoff from rooftops into a rain barrel reduces the amount of potentially polluted stormwater being discharged into storm sewers that empty into nearby waterbodies in our watersheds. Simply put, installing a rain barrel is a simple and easy way to save money and

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conserve water, with the added benefits of decreasing stormwater runoff and improving water quality!

#### Focus of Program

The District encourages Porter County citizens to become active stewards of local watershed water quality through the *Community Rain Barrel Program*. The program seeks to provide a maximum of two (2) rain barrels per approved community organization applicant to be used for watershed water quality protection as well as educational tools.

The rain barrel(s) will be installed in public spaces where;

1. The rain water collected will reduce stormwater runoff,
2. The rain water collected will serve as water for surrounding vegetation,
3. The rain barrel(s) will be highly visible to all visitors, and
4. The rain barrel(s) will have educational signage [provided by the district] to encourage personal use of rain barrels.

Community organizations may include homeowners associations, property owners associations, community gardens, schools, and parks which have accessible and highly used public spaces. Public spaces may include community green spaces and gazebos, community gardens, schools, and parks.

#### Term of Program

Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis or until such time as the program is inactive. Applications will be reviewed and awarded within three weeks of submission. Rain barrel recipients will install rain barrel(s) in spring/summer prior to rainy season to facilitate optimal use for the growing period. Rain barrel recipients agree to maintain information regarding the volumes and impact of captured rainwater as well as any public feedback about the project and submit two (2) annual reports on such. The reports should include photos and any copies of promotional material issued about the project. The two (2) annual reports will be submitted to the district by December 15<sup>th</sup> of the first and second year of use.

#### Application Process

Applicants must complete the attached program application form and submit it electronically to [info@PorterCountyRecycling.org](mailto:info@PorterCountyRecycling.org).

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### Community Rain Barrel Program

The application should include:

- ✓ **Organization and contact information**
- ✓ **Project description**
- ✓ **A timeline for installation and maintenance of rain barrel(s) in the off season**
- ✓ **A budget including costs associated with installation and maintenance of rain barrel(s) as well as potential cost savings from reduced tap water usage**

### Program Evaluation Criteria

While the program is non-competitive, there are certain criteria on which each application will be evaluated:

- ✓ **Innovative** – new project or new method of accomplishing water quality protection.
- ✓ **Effective** – project will reduce stormwater runoff.
- ✓ **Transferable** – project has the ability to be emulated to other public spaces and homes.
- ✓ **Sustainable** – project should continue after the program period.
- ✓ **Use of available resources** – project should incorporate recycled content materials whenever possible.

### Program Review Process

Each program application will be reviewed by Therese Haller – District Executive Director, Donna Stuckert – District Public Outreach Coordinator and a member of the District’s Citizen Advisory Committee.

### Questions

Any questions may be directed to Therese Haller at the District office 219-465-3694.



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## Community Rain Barrel Program

### Program Application - continued

Use the space below to provide a timeline for installation and maintenance of rain barrel(s) including during the off season.

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Use the space below to provide a budget including costs associated with installation and maintenance of rain barrel(s) as well as potential cost savings from reduced tap water usage.

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By signing this program application, I agree that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that the organization is committed to the project.

Signature	Printed Name	Date
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