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AGENDA ITEM MEMO

BOARD MEETING DATE: October 2, 2025

TO: Board Members

THROUGH: Bryan McMath, Executive Administrator
John T. Dupnik, P.G., Deputy Executive Administrator, Water Science and Conservation
Ashley Harden, General Counsel

FROM: Shae Luther, Program Specialist, Municipal Conservation
Erika Mancha, Director, Conservation and Innovative Water Technologies

SUBJECT: 2025 Texas Rain Catcher Awards

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider approving and presenting the 2025 Texas Rain Catcher Awards.

BACKGROUND

Rainwater harvesting is a valuable conservation strategy and drought-resilience tool. Collecting and storing rainwater can reduce the demand for local public water supplies by providing an alternative water source for a variety of beneficial uses. In the 2022 State Water Plan, three regional water planning groups (Regions E, J, and K) recommended rainwater harvesting as a water management strategy. If implemented, these strategies would produce an estimated 5,000 acre-feet of new water supply by 2070.

The TWDB launched the Texas Rain Catcher Award in 2007 to promote rainwater harvesting, educate the public about the benefits of rainwater harvesting, and recognize those businesses, organizations, and individuals dedicated to conserving Texas' precious water resources. Since the program's inception, the TWDB has bestowed 75 Texas Rain Catcher Awards, 4 honorable mentions, and 3 honorary awards to organizations or individuals who have been active in rainwater harvesting.

KEY ISSUES

The TWDB received a total of 24 applications before the June 30 deadline for this year's award cycle. A panel of five judges consisting of TWDB staff scored applications based on five criteria:

1. Demonstration of how the rainwater harvesting system has helped conserve surface water and/or groundwater through reduced dependency on conventional water supply systems
2. Demonstration of how the rainwater harvesting system has saved money for the owner
3. Originality and innovation as evidenced by the application of new knowledge, new application of existing knowledge, or an innovative mix of existing and new knowledge
4. Demonstration of how the system has benefited the environment (for example, reduced erosion or threat of flooding) without itself adversely impacting the environment
5. Uniqueness of the rainwater harvesting system or project

Each judge scored the applications based on these criteria and then ranked them. These rankings were then combined, and the applications with the highest ranking were selected for awards in each of five categories.

The following awardees are recommended for the 2025 Texas Rain Catcher Awards:

Agricultural – Dove Ridge Vineyard

Commercial – Hays City Texas

Educational – Post Oak Savannah Groundwater Conservation District

Governmental – City of Austin's Rain Catcher Pilot Program

Residential – Jasek Residence

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the rankings and recommendations of the judges, the Executive Administrator recommends presenting the five identified candidates with a 2025 Texas Rain Catcher Award.

Attachment:

1. Recommended 2025 Texas Rain Catcher Award Project Descriptions

Attachment 1

Recommended 2025 Texas Rain Catcher Award Project Descriptions

Agricultural: Dove Ridge Vineyard (Parker County; Weatherford)

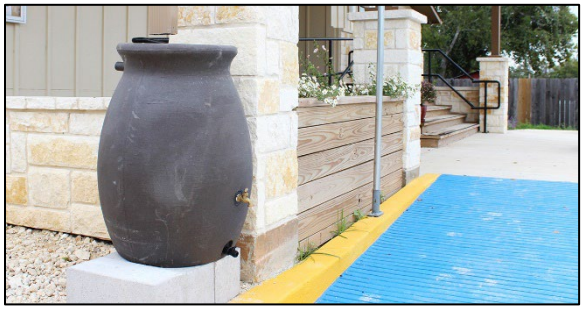
Dove Ridge historically used groundwater to irrigate the vineyard. To mitigate aquifer depletion and provide fire protection, the owners turned to rainwater harvesting. Rainwater is collected from over 15,000 square feet of roofed area on the wedding venue pavilion and stored in a 65,000-gallon storage tank. Pressure pumps distribute water to 2-inch irrigation lines used to water over 2,000 plants that would otherwise rely on groundwater. The storage capacity of the tank allows irrigation for approximately four to six weeks without rainfall, and the tank itself is equipped with both 6- and 4-inch fire department connections. Silver Creek Volunteer Fire Department has used the site as a training location and has access in case of emergencies.

Commercial: Hays City Texas (Hays County; Driftwood)

Hays City Texas is a 21-acre, multi-use property that has combined community-minded development with water conservation strategies. The owners have access to nearly 8 million gallons of groundwater from permitted wells to support their home, several businesses, and agricultural activities on the property. However, they have been able to stay 70 percent below their monthly groundwater pumping allotment, on average, since January 2025 by harvesting and utilizing rainwater in place of groundwater. The property collects rainwater from 18,000 square feet of roof space that is stored in four 50,000-gallon water storage tanks, purchased from a school district demolition project, and one 10,000-gallon tank. The project has put sustainability at its core by incorporating efficient irrigation, drought-resistant landscaping, condensate collection, and other conservation initiatives to serve as a model for how to conserve and protect community resources.

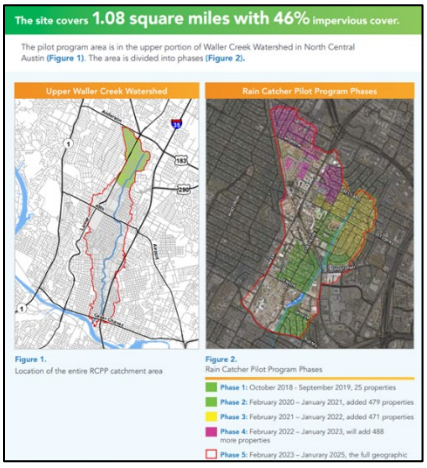
Educational: Post Oak Savannah Groundwater Conservation District (Burleson and Milam counties)

Post Oak Savannah Groundwater Conservation District's service area encompasses primarily rural areas, with over 90 percent of the population relying on groundwater. To help reduce the reliance on personal wells and public systems, the district created its Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program in 2017. To date, the district has funded 82 rainwater harvesting systems that include a total of 172 cisterns and a combined storage capacity of 504,623 gallons. Over $259,600 has been awarded in rebates since the program's inception. Before receiving funding, participants must complete the district's rainwater harvesting class, which is offered at its own demonstration site. By promoting the capturing of rainwater, the program helps reduce reliance on personal water wells and public water systems while bringing together education, funding, and long-term water planning to build a culture of conservation and reduce groundwater demand locally and collectively.



Governmental: City of Austin's Rain Catcher Pilot Program (Travis County; Austin)

The Rain Catcher Pilot Program, administered by the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department, has helped facilitate the installation of 117 cisterns on 40 residential properties that capture 120,149 gallons of rainwater for every 3-inch storm event. The program was designed to financially incentivize rain gardens, cisterns, and rainwater irrigated street trees on residential properties to help participants collect, slow down, and store rainwater water to reduce drainage issues on their properties. The program integrates a system-wide, resident-friendly, cross-departmental approach centering on community, conservation, and resilience. The program has helped residents save thousands of dollars on installation and utility costs, while also helping them reduce outdoor municipal water use. Integrating installations into diverse property types, the program increases resilience at the neighborhood scale and empowers community members to be active stewards of their environment.



Residential: Jasek Residence (Williamson County; Georgetown)

The Jaseks switched their water source from groundwater to 100 percent rainwater as other residences in their neighborhood have needed to lower their pumps or drill new wells to sustain themselves. The property has two rainwater harvesting systems, one on the barn and one on the house, with a combined collection area of 3,195 square feet and 16,000 gallons of storage. By having the two systems plumbed together, water is easily moved between the two, allowing for more flexibility in supplying water where needed. The system was designed to tolerate extreme heat and cold, as well as supply water to the house for toilets, even without electricity. In addition to supplying all potable water for the residence, the system also irrigates gardens and orchards, waters the compost bin, fills a wildlife watering trough, and automatically refills a bird bath, ensuring fresh water is available even when the owners are gone.