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AGENDA ITEM MEMO

BOARD MEETING DATE: October 17, 2024

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: John Sutton, Manager, Municipal Conservation
Shae Luther, Program Specialist, Municipal Conservation

SUBJECT: 2024 Texas Rain Catcher Awards

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider approving and presenting the 2024 Texas Rain Catcher Awards.

BACKGROUND

Rainwater harvesting is a valuable conservation strategy and drought-resilience tool. Collecting and storing rainwater can reduce the demand on 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 70 Texas Rain Catcher Awards, 4 honorable mentions, and 2 honorary awards to individuals who have been active in rainwater harvesting.

KEY ISSUES

The TWDB received a total of 14 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:

Our Mission	Board Members
Leading the state's efforts in ensuring a secure water future for Texas	Brooke T. Paup, Chairwoman L'Oreal Stepney, P.E., Board Member Tonya R. Miller, Board Member Bryan McMath, Executive Administrator

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 the 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. Additionally, the judging panel agreed to recommend an honorary award be included this year. The honorary award nominee has been recommended based on their involvement in promoting rainwater harvesting at the state, national, and international levels.

The following awardees are recommended for the 2024 Texas Rain Catcher Awards and honorary award:

Agricultural – Master Gardener Demonstration Garden

Commercial – Sonora Bank

Educational – The Campsite at Shield Ranch

Governmental – Alabama-Coushatta Tribe

Residential – Gabbay Residence

Honorary – Hari Krishna

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the rankings and recommendations of the judges, the Executive Administrator recommends presenting the five identified candidates with a 2024 Texas Rain Catcher Award and one honorary award.

Attachment:

1. Recommended 2024 Texas Rain Catcher Award project descriptions.

Attachment 1

Recommended 2024 Texas Rain Catcher Award project descriptions

Agricultural: Master Gardener Demonstration Garden – Tom Green 4-H Center (Tom Green County; San Angelo, Texas)

The Concho Valley Master Gardeners propagate over 6,000 plants in greenhouses at the Tom Green 4-H Center. The plants are grown to sell for their annual fundraiser and provide well-adapted, drought-tolerant, locally grown plants to residents. The system consists of three 3,000-gallon tanks, two of which are plumbed together and provide water to the greenhouse and demonstration garden beds. The third is used for drip irrigation to beds around the building or can be pumped to the back tanks for the greenhouse if needed. Other features include a rain garden next to the back two tanks, a 50-gallon wildlife guzzler, and a smaller collection system to divert water from the front awning into a second, plumbed wildlife dripper. The rainwater harvesting system also serves as an educational feature, providing information and inspiration to interested homeowners to help start their own rainwater harvesting systems which can further the conservation of groundwater and surface water in the Concho Valley area.



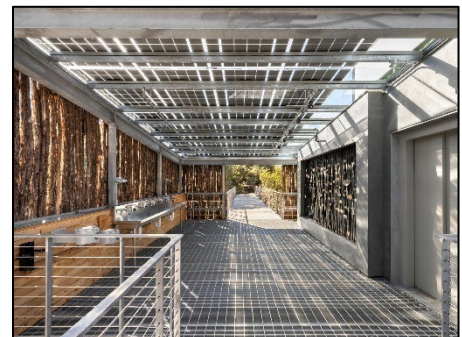
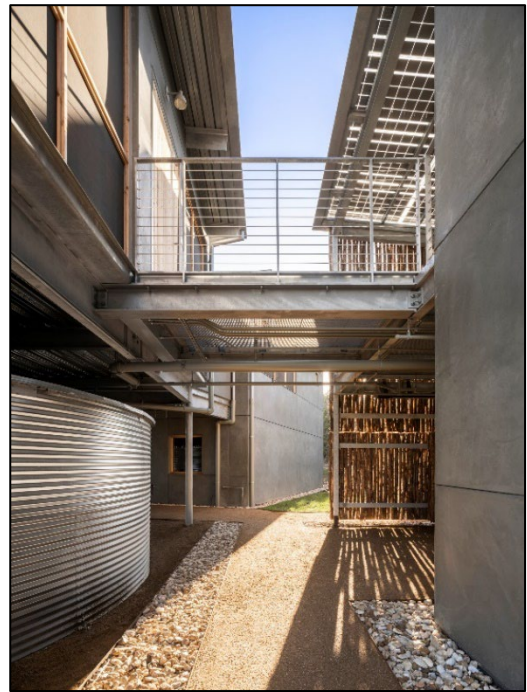
Commercial: Sonora Bank (Comal County; New Braunfels, Texas)

The rainwater harvesting system at Sonora Bank uses collected rainwater for irrigation purposes rather than relying on municipally supplied water. This approach not only conserves municipal water during times of drought, but it also helps reduce the building's carbon footprint and performs a stormwater detention function for the property. The system is comprised of a 20,259-gallon corrugated metal liner tank that was designed to be integrated into the site with a stone surround installed. This helps it fit in with the feel of the building and site, providing a rural aesthetic that corresponds with the bank's brand. With a large roof area and relatively small landscaping area that needs to be irrigated, the rainwater harvesting system provides an opportunity to meet a large portion of the annual irrigation water demand while lessening reliance on municipal water.



Educational: The Campsite at Shield Ranch (Travis County; Austin, Texas)

The Campsite at Shield Ranch is a completely off-grid nature immersion camp that provides lessons in sustainability and conservation. The system has a storage capacity of 67,800 gallons that consists of two 30,500-gallon reservoirs plus two 3,400-gallon cisterns. As a pilot project, the primary goal of the Campsite's rainwater system was to demonstrate alternatives and pave a permitting process for other Texans to construct more sustainably. However, it also serves as a living, learning model that draws community and sustainability-focused tour groups to the Campsite to learn about the innovative system.



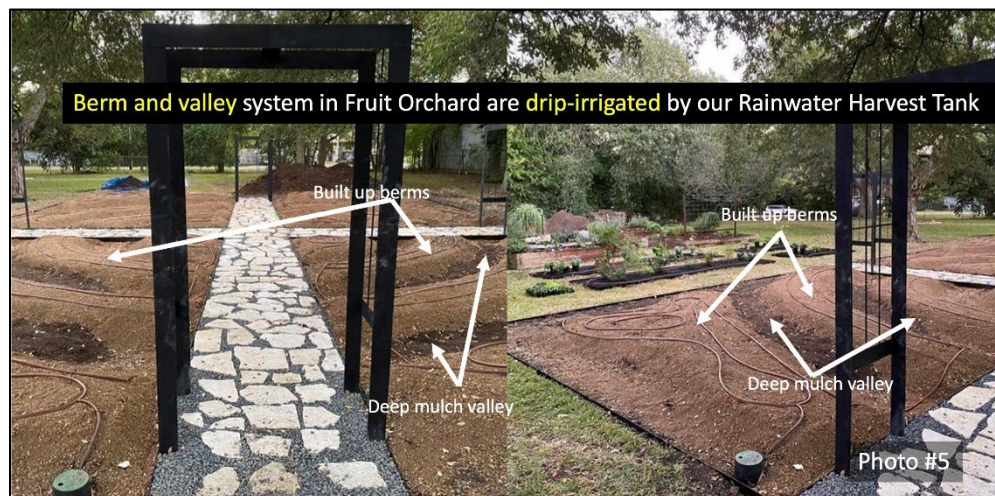
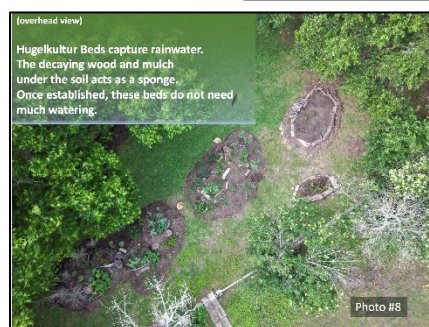
Governmental: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe (Polk County; Livingston, Texas)

The rainwater harvesting system installed by the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas allows them to harvest and store 65,000 gallons of rainwater that will be used for wildfire mitigation, irrigation of a community garden, and dust abatement. As prescribed burns are a way of life for the tribe, being able to refill trucks with rainwater rather than from area lakes and wells not only relieves dependency on local water resources but cuts the expense of hauling water from other areas while also helping outreach and expansion of conservation efforts. Part of the project included providing education and demonstration of assembly and installation of smaller-scale systems for household rainwater harvesting. Tribal members attending the outreach event received a free rain barrel. Important aspects of the project are the strengthening of partnerships among the various groups and agencies involved; the project generating interest among other tribes in Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Louisiana; and the promotion of water conservation throughout the region.



Residential: Gabbay Residence (Caldwell County; Lockhart, Texas)

The Gabbay residence uses collected rainwater for their prolific vegetable garden, fruit orchard, and flower garden on their one-acre lot. The 10,000-gallon rainwater harvesting system consists of several techniques combined in one residential system that provides food, beauty, erosion control, and replenishment of groundwater. The surface area of the gardens and their use of Hügelskultur beds, a technique that uses sloped and raised planting beds filled with topsoil, rotted wood stumps and limbs, and other organic matter, helps to redirect and hold water on the property, thus reducing runoff and eliminating flooding. The collected rainwater provides all the water necessary for irrigating the gardens throughout the year, thereby reducing the dependency on municipal water while reducing their water bill at the same time.



Honorary: Hari Krishna

Hari, while a staff member at the TWDB, not only initiated the development of the original Texas Rain Catcher Award in 2007 but was instrumental in promoting and maintaining rainwater harvesting as an initiative at the TWDB. Furthermore, Hari founded the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (ARCSA), a 501(c)(3) organization, in 1994 in Austin, Texas, to promote rainwater catchment systems in the United States. He was the first president of the association, dedicating 11 years to the association's establishment. He organized the first two national ARCSA conferences in 2003 and 2005, and he was the first person to be recognized by ARCSA in 2005 for his contributions. He also served as Vice President for both the International Rainwater Catchment Systems Association and the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance, based in Geneva, Switzerland" (arcsa.org). Hari participated in an online discussion about the Texas Rain Catcher Award and rainwater harvesting in 2020 with that year's winners and interested parties, and he has continued to follow the award over the years. Hari's commitment to rainwater harvesting is undeniable, and he deserves to be recognized as an honorary recipient of one of this year's Rain Catcher Awards, through the program that he created.