International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance
Alianza Internacional para la Gestión del Agua de Lluvia (IRHA)
Alliance Internationale pour la Gestion de l'Eau de Pluie (IRHA)

bRAINstorming

NEWSLETTER NO. 23 - JANUARY 2009

Our newsletter focuses on the activities in Rainwater Harvesting, the field of the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) and its partners.

The topic of this issue: ARCSA, the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association

Editorial

Dear Rainwater Harvesters, Readers, the IRHA Members and Friends,

As announced, the IRHA gives the floor to eminent organizations, networks and individuals working in the field of Rainwater Harvesting, with the aim of promoting their success and encouraging other groups and individuals to follow the example.

You may think that our choice to dedicate this issue of the IRHA newsletter to our American colleagues is influenced by the election of Barak Obama to the presidency of the United States of America. It could have been a well scheduled action, but it is a pure coincidence. Good things never come alone, as the proverb states it.

The ARCSA (American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association) has an amazing success as a rainwater harvesting advocate and promotional body as well as a scientific pole and entrepreneurial catalizator. That was why we asked its members to present its activities to the international community of rainwater harvesters and its friends.

I met the founder of this Association, Mr. Hari Krishna in summer 2007. Along with a third colleague, we were passionate rainwater harvesters, tailor cutting plans and dreaming about how to unify and reinforce the scattered international movement of RWH. Now, almost two years later, we take pleasure in seeing the steps, although small, that we have taken in that direction, some of which are reflected in the dossier they kindly sent us and we are presenting here.

The IRHA will nonetheless complete their information, since by modesty, by geographical sprawling and surely, by being taken up by the Presidential election, they did not present it in its full splendor.

Finally, I take this opportunity to remind you that if you would like to take our newsletter as a means of making other rainwater harvesters and friends know about your activities and achievements, you should not hesitate to send us your suggestions.

Vessela Monta

DOSSIER : **ARCSA, the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association**

A note from Dr. Hari Krishna

Dr. Hari Krishna

I appreciate this opportunity to compile information on rainwater harvesting activities in the USA for the IRHA newsletter. I contacted current ARCSA officers and also extracted information from recent ARCSA newsletters. The following information may not be comprehensive, but will provide some highlights and links to other sources.

As the Founder of the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (ARCSA), I am delighted at the great progress the organization has made during the past 15 years. Many professionals across the country have contributed greatly to the continued growth and success of ARCSA - www.arcsa.org.

ARCSA has over 500 members now, administrative offices in Austin, Texas and is holding national conferences each year, as opposed to biennial conferences previously. The next ARCSA conference will be held in the Atlanta, Georgia area in September 2009 (see conference information and link in this newsletter).

The first State chapter of ARCSA was organized in Texas in late 2007. The Texas Rainwater Catchment Association (TRCA) will be holding their first annual conference in March 2009. More information is available from the TRCA website - www.texrca.org

As many of you know, "The Texas Manual on Rainwater Harvesting", published by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) is a globally recognized publication. It is available on-line free of cost from the TWDB website at http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/iwt/rainwater.asp

There are many on-going activities in rainwater harvesting in other states such as Arizona, California, New Mexico, Georgia, Oregon and Washington. A good source of information for on-going RWH developments in various states is http://www.arcsa.org/news.html

On a personal note, even though I retired from Texas State Government - after about 20 years of service - I am currently involved in various consulting and training activities in rainwater harvesting and other alternative technologies.

I hope you will find the information in this newsletter interesting and useful.

Wish you all the very best in 2009!

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON RWH

ARCSA offers Rainwater Harvesting Accreditation Program

The ARCSA "Professional Accreditation" program aims at accrediting those individuals who have some knowledge and experience in rainwater harvesting. Should you be interested in this program, please, **click here.**

ARCSA EVENTS

2008 ARCSA Conference

ARCSA hosted successful 2008 conference in Santa Monica, CA, where exhibitors and other rainwater harvesting professionals could mix and mingle with conference attendees and local residents. **Read more**

The Conference also offered the opportunity to present the Annual ARCSA Awards

Educator of the Year - Billy Kniffen of Menard, Texas
Manufacturer of Most Innovative Product - Rain Harvesting Pty, Ltd. of Australia
Best Public Display - Seattle Public Utilities for its SEA Street Project *
Company of the Year - AB Pacific of Hawaii
Personal Recognition Award - Brad Lancaster of Tucson, Arizona **

* See bellow the IRHA note on the SEA Street Project
** See bellow the IRHA note on Brad Lancaster's second book on RWH

2009 ARCSA Conference - Call for Papers

The next ARCSA Conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia in September 2009. It will include three days of presentations, poster sessions, a large exhibit area, and field trips to rainwater harvesting sites. Individuals interested in presenting a paper or poster at the conference are asked to prepare and submit papers describing the subject matter and/or results in sufficient detail to allow evaluation of the proposed presentation**.** Papers may be submitted from not only within the USA, but from any other country as well.

The deadline for submissions is January 30, 2009. More information on paper submission is available on the ARCSA website at http://www.arcsa.org//2009papers.pdf

COMPETITIONS

Texas Rain Catcher Award

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) initiated the Texas Rain Catcher Award, a rainwater harvesting competition and recognition program to promote the technology, educate the public, and to recognize excellence in the application of rainwater harvesting systems in Texas. Should you be interested in participating in this competition, please, **click here**.

Contest to Design Systems for Developing Countries

InnoCentive and ARCSA member Enterprise Works/VITA announced a contest to develop an affordable rainwater storage system for low-income families in developing nations. For further information, please, **click here**

RWH PROJECTS

Church volunteers install Rainwater Collection System

On November 8, 2008, the Rock United Methodist Church in Cedar Park, TX, completed the plumbing of a rain water harvesting system that is ready to capture the rain water from the church's roof **Read more**

MORE ABOUT THE ARCSA

In the United States of America, this immense country, countless are the counties, regions and cities where the water resources have to be managed carefully so that they are sufficient to satisfy the household and economic needs. This necessity, combined with the developed ecological sensitivity in many professional and associative circles, helped by modern technology and favourable economic environment, led to the implementation of amazing projects.

The philosophy they are built on is so comprehensive, that nobody can contest it: “let the nature come into our cities, it will retain and purify the storm water, replenish the aquifer and improve the micro-climate and living conditions”. It sounds simple in theory, but its execution is revolutionary, since it breaks the rules and practices of rainwater management accumulated during many centuries!

Here we are presenting you with two of these innovative projects, already implemented in Seattle and Los Angeles, for the pride and pleasure of their citizens. We will also Brad Lancaster’s books. They offer sufficient knowledge, self confidence and a touch of enthusiasm. It incites the readers to think and practice Rainwater Harvesting.

Vessela Monta

Natural Drainage Projects in Seattle

Natural Drainage Systems (NDS) are an innovative alternative to traditional storm water management systems. The pipes and ditches of traditional drainage systems carry runoff of rainwater with traces of everyday contaminants such as oil, paint, fertilizers and heavy metals directly into creeks, rivers, lakes. The speed and volume of water coming out of pipes erodes stream channels. These problems decrease water quality, disrupt marine food chains and impact wildlife habitat negatively. NDS limit these negative impacts of the storm water by redesigning residential streets in such a way that plants, trees and soils are used to clean runoff and manage the rainwater flows. Vegetated swales, storm water cascades and small wetland ponds allow soils to absorb water, slowing flows and filtering out many contaminants.

The reading of Street Edge Alternatives (SEA Streets), completed in 2001, 110th Cascade and High Point projects will convince you that these features help to reduce the total volume of storm water leaving a street, sometimes by 99 percent.

http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/util/About_SPU/Drainage_&_Sewer_System/index.asp

The Tree People and the Sun Valley Watershed Project

Born after the refusal of an idealist 15 year old boy, Andy Lipkis, to see the forests surrounding his native Los Angeles diebacking because of the smog produced in this city, this movement grew in a non profit corporation for tree planting called California Conservation Project. Later, the public unofficially renamed it "The Tree People." Read more

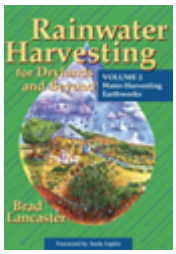
Million Trees initiative, Street planting, Mountain planting, Campus planting and other types of planting are only a part of their Forestry activities, which helped to change the landscape in the region, but also the state of mind of many of its inhabitants.

The Tree People put in practice the innovative idea that urban areas must be organized as a part of a watershed. With an integrated approach, multiple objectives and a multitude of participants (state agencies, non-governmental structures, citizens) people can save money, improve public health and security, and cut drastically the green gas emissions, at the same time diminishing the risk of drought or floods. By incorporating better storm water management practices, such as the introduction of swales, retention grading, cisterns, infiltrators and strategically-

planted trees in building and landscaping designs, a multitude of benefits can be realized (improved water quality, a decreased risk of flooding, a reduced need for water importation, heat-island effect mitigation, a reduction in contributions to global climate change and an augmented supply of local groundwater).

The actions of the Tree People represent an inspired vision of how, by investing in human capital and ecology, we can change towns and cities into green spaces. Read more about the amazing Sun Valley Watershed Project, on www.treepeople.org

***Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond*, by Brad Lancaster**



I have read a lot of works on Rainwater Harvesting, all of them highly useful, interesting, sometimes inspiring, sometimes more scholarly profiled. But among all these moments of enjoyment, I rarely had the same feeling I had while keeping Brad's book in my hands. I thought that this was the simplest, most logical and convincing reading which can lead people, even those who have never heard about rainwater harvesting, to become its passionate practitioners.

Written in a very understandable style, with explanations accompanied by many drawings and sketches (not exempt of a scent of humour), building knowledge step by step, leaving the logic to convince the unbelievers and using the needed science to complete the empirical arguments, this book represents a powerful tool for Rainwater Harvesting.

Presented in three volumes, the text leads the reader to three different domains. Volume 1, already published, shows us how to organize the site in view to take profit of all the advantages offered by nature. Volume 2, published in 2008, draws our attention to the earthworks which can transform our site in a rainwater catchment area and make us good rainwater and grey water managers. With regards to volume 3, we are looking forward to its publication!

The Manual on "Rainwater Catchment Design and Installation Standards"

Dr Krishna completed the information on the ARCSA with the news that the updated draft of RWH Guidelines has just been published on their site, **http://www.arcsa.org/codefinaldraft.pdf**

A Poem

The Voice of the Rain

by Walt Whitman

And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here translated:
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless sea,
Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether changed, and yet the same,
I descend to lave the drouths, atomies, dust-layers of the globe,
And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent, unborn;
And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own origin, and make pure and beautify it;
(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfillment, wandering,
Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

Geneva Raindrops Award

Art and development: In search of creative minds!

The Geneva Raindrops Award 2008 Contest has been extended

We remind you that the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) has launched a competition intended to demonstrate the advantages of catching and using rainwater through Video Films.

The date for the final submission of the videos is 25th May, 2009.

Do not hesitate to take your camera and reveal or unfold your creativity to promote effectively rainwater harvesting. Be kindly free to participate in the competition and contribute to the IRHA effort to sensitize people to the benefits of this practice of rain collection as one of the simplest among the several solutions to the problems related to the lack of water around the world!

Demonstrate to the world how talented you are, at the same time contributing to save the planet and ensuring a better future for humanity. Please visit our website, where you will find the rules of our **Geneva Raindrops Award 2008** contest. Read Rules of the Competition

Upcoming newsletter

The next issue of the IRHA "bRAINstorming" e-newsletter will deal with art representations of rainwater.

IRHA will be asking you, our newsletter readers, to contribute to the writing of our future issues. Please send your articles, photos or comments linked to the topic announced. We thank you in advance for taking the time to making your e-newsletter and helping the IRHA focus on your needs.

The editor of the IRHA newsletter online

We are happy to confirm that we can keep our promise and that our newsletter online is available in its three versions, English, French and Spanish. Our editor, Ms Gladys Ambort, would be pleased to reply to you whenever necessary: secretariat@irha-h2o.org

Become a member

The IRHA members benefit from our extensive network and contribute to increasing rainwater harvesting in the world.

Become a member online (choose one of these):

- Student Membership
- Organization Membership
- Individual Members
- Supporting Friends Membership
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