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## **Catch a falling drop**

As the snow melted away and the rain came pouring down last week, the Capital Regional District issued a cautionary media release warning residents to avoid area beaches as municipal sanitary sewer systems were overwhelmed by inflow and infiltration, causing them to back up.

This announcement came as little surprise to Vic West resident Freya Keddie, who has been doing her best to keep local government officials apprised of the benefits of moving toward large-scale rainwater harvesting to take the burden off the region's aging sewer and storm-water infrastructure and make use of a currently-wasted resource.

Keddie's interest in the subject has grown out of repeated sewer back-ups in the basement of her home, caused by rain runoff from her roof that led directly into the sewer pipes and filled them past capacity. It was then she discovered that capturing the rainwater in a cistern alleviated their back-up problems and took some stress off the system as a whole.

While municipal governments are ultimately responsible for managing sewer infrastructure, they've been slow to jump on board the rain-harvesting bandwagon. The CRD studied the issue in 2007 and recognized its benefits, but concluded at the time that any attempt at a large-scale rain harvesting program where the water could be used for plumbing purposes would be cost-prohibitive until sewage treatment fees are levied against CRD residents.

"There are several benefits of harvesting rainwater in addition to reduced use of municipal water," that report says. "Rainwater systems that supply toilets and laundry would act as rainwater detention systems to eliminate more than half of the total roof runoff to storm or combined sewers, and a significantly greater proportion of peak flows. This reduction could substantially reduce combined sewer overflows and winter peak flows through future wastewater treatment plants connected to combined sewers."

Keddie's website at [urbanraincatchersgazette.com](http://urbanraincatchersgazette.com) contains links to all things rain harvest-related.