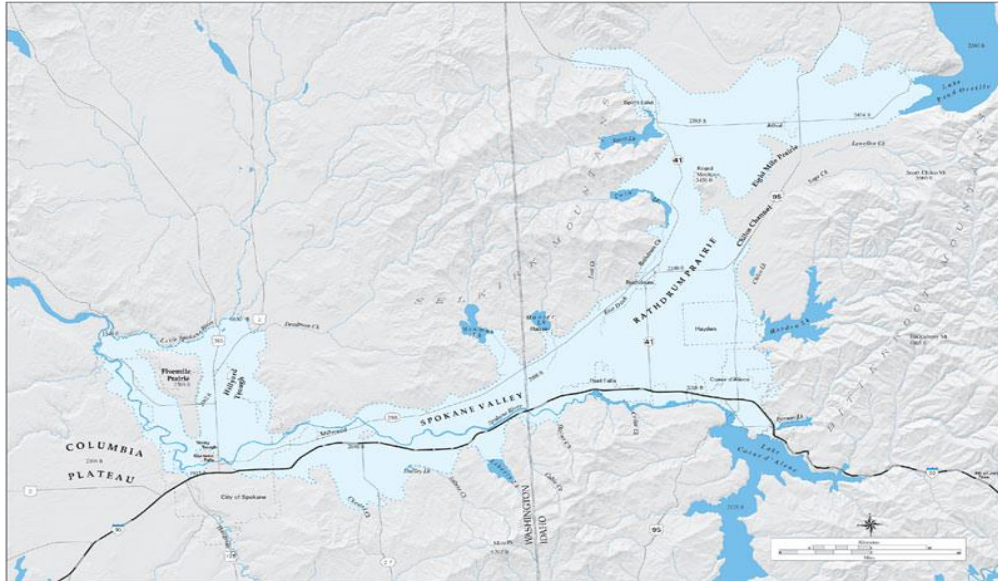


RAIN BARRELS OVER A SOLE-SOURCE AQUIFER



Washington, like many other western states, did not allow rain barrel use whatsoever until the last few years. Colorado modernized its pioneer-age laws regarding water rights in July 2009, allowing rain barrel usage to anyone to any degree, so long as they have a permit and did not interfere with any other's water rights.

Washington soon followed in October of the same year, however, here one may only harvest water which:

1. Has run off of a rooftop;
2. Is stored in a rain barrel or underground storage system;
3. Is used solely on the property which it was harvested on;
4. The amount does not harm others' water rights or the public water supply.

Legally, in Washington, anybody can harvest rainwater whether they are above the Spokane Aquifer or not. However, whether this is morally right or wrong can become a bit of a grey area. First, let's look at the positives that a rainwater harvesting system can have both at a personal and municipal level:

1. It can save a household up to 50% on the average monthly metered water bill;
2. You will, by default, save potable water;
3. Rainwater has many uses: watering a garden or lawn, washing your car, or scrubbing the deck;
4. Save energy by not requiring the city to pump so much potable water to your service area.

In essence, it seems as though rainwater harvesting isn't for the hippies anymore: it is for the frugal penny-saver, the eco-conscious hipster, the gardener, vehicle enthusiast, and busy bee in us all.

Now, for the negatives:

1. It is a significant investment of up to \$2,000. This is not a low-income-friendly project for this reason and could be seen as a way to further divide the classes, as many of these “going green” projects tend to do.
2. Because people would be paying less for their decreased usage of the city water supply, it could mean less maintenance cash for the city, making for longer periods between the servicing and the replacement of pipes.
3. In Spokane's case, the City's sole source of potable water is the Spokane Aquifer. One could easily argue that no matter how small the amount annually taken by residents, it means less for the aquifer and therefore the common public. If the aquifer were to not recharge for the next 100 years as well as it has in the past, we could see a draught. This law could be blamed by politicians and residents and it could be overturned and pioneer-days water rights laws may be needed once again.

Source: <http://www.globalsiteplans.com/environmental-design/rain-barrels-over-a-sole-source-aquifer-who-owns-the-sky/>