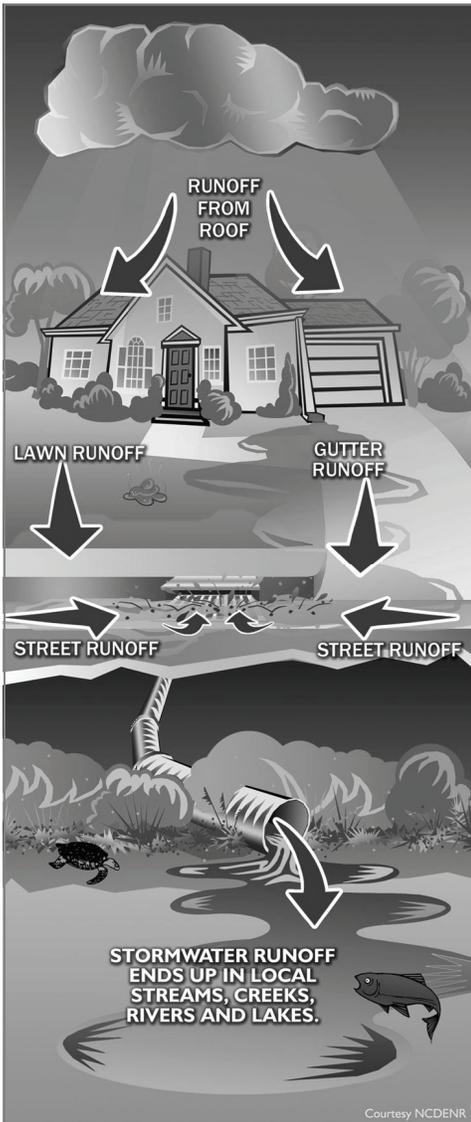


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A Tale of Two Rain Barrels—Promoting Water & Watershed Conservation



When rain falls in undeveloped areas, most of the water soaks into the ground. Natural vegetation such as trees, shrubs and tall grasses slows the flow of rainwater and filters pollutants. However, in developed areas where most of the natural vegetation is gone, rain hits hard surfaces like roofs and roads, and then runs off quickly downhill. The excess water picks up pollutants—oil, sediment, bacteria, pesticides and fertilizers—from parking lots, streets and lawns, and carries them into rivers, lakes and oceans. This runoff can also cause flooding.

So what do rain barrels have to do with all of this? By collecting and storing rainwater from rooftops, gutters and downspouts for later use, they reduce the amount of runoff, helping keep our streams, rivers, lakes and oceans clean; reduce erosion and flooding on your property; and they also help prevent flooding in downstream areas. This stored water can be used to water gardens and lawns, wash cars and windows, and for other outdoor uses, saving money and energy by reducing tap water use. While used most commonly by homeowners, rain barrels can also be used on commercial properties.



Last year, Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District collaborated with the City of Middletown on a demonstration project with the goal of promoting rain barrels as inexpensive, easy to use and maintain “green” practices that conserve water and watersheds. Two very public locations, Russell Library and Kidcity Children’s Museum, were selected to install rain barrels and educational signs. Each is a prominent destination drawing a diverse clientele from Middletown and the region.

Rain barrels were purchased through the City’s spring 2010 community distribution program. District and City staff worked

with Russell Library and Kidcity to plan for the location of rain barrels and develop signs to fit each venue. The final component is an educational brochure, to be given out at each site. This project, funded in part with a grant from The Rockfall Foundation, is intended to serve as a model that we can replicate in other municipalities in our District.

You can’t miss the Kidcity rain barrel and sign, located by the main entrance at the back parking lot!! This whimsical, colorful, eye-catching sign was created by Kidcity Artistic Director Scott Kessel. The Russell Library sign takes more of an instructive approach, as is appropriate for the location. Due to delays in production, it won’t be installed until spring. The rain barrel and sign will be located by the downspout to the left of the main entrance.



For more information about rain barrels contact the District office, or visit www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal.