University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant partners with national experts to host rainwater harvesting workshop on O‘ahu

The Sea Grant College Program (UH Sea Grant) and Water Resources Research Center (WRRC) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa have partnered with the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (ARCSA) to host a two-day workshop on O‘ahu to provide training in all aspects of rainwater harvesting.

Rainwater harvesting is the collection of precipitation for multiple uses, such as watering landscaping, flushing toilets, and, when properly collected and treated, a source of potable water. Rainwater collection systems can be designed for very wet or very dry locations, and can also be used to manage stormwater runoff to prevent flooding. Systems can be sized to serve a single household or a large commercial building and are used worldwide in regions ranging from arid deserts to damp rainforests.

In some areas on O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, and other islands, the only source of water for home use is a rainwater catchment system, and improving the efficiency of these systems can save homeowners and renters money while delivering more water.

The workshop will prepare participants to achieve professional accreditation with ARCSA and cover rainwater collection techniques, supply and demand calculations, and all system components, from rooftop collectors to pumps to storage tanks. The course will also provide instruction on disinfection and maintenance of systems.

The workshop is the first activity under a new partnership between UH Sea Grant and ARCSA to advance the understanding and adoption of sustainable water practices in the islands. Through the new agreement, UH Sea Grant and ARCSA will work together to identify and conduct research and outreach on practices and policies to ensure Hawai‘i’s coastal communities have access to clean, fresh water now and for generations to come.

"Fresh, clean water is a precious resource whose sustainable use is an environmental, economic, social, and moral imperative," says Professor E. Gordon Grau, director of UH Sea Grant and interim director of the university's WRRC. He further states, "Hawai‘i is the most geographically isolated island chain in the world, developing self-reliant technologies and practices, such as rainwater harvesting, just makes sense."

Joint activities will also engage the university’s WRRC in research on water supplies and new technologies, public outreach to help residents and visitors use water wisely, and opportunities for job training and accreditation through ARCSA's professional designations, workshops, and
continuing education. Another key element of the partnership will be to provide the latest information on new water technologies and practices to legislators and other decision-makers in the state.

Billy Kniffen, vice-president of ARCSA and a Texas A & M University water resource associate in the AgriLife Extension Service will teach the workshop. “I’m very excited about coming to O‘ahu and the University of Hawai‘i to provide technical training on how to manage rainwater and harvest the rain. ARCSA is honored to work with Sea Grant in this workshop; together we can insure future generations have the opportunity to live in a healthy environment, sustainably, with the rainfall we receive.”

The workshop is open to the public, though some familiarity with rainwater harvesting systems is recommended. Water resource professionals, engineers, architects, and other professionals in natural resource and design sciences are encouraged to attend. The workshop will be held on the UH Mānoa campus, August 19-20, 2013. For more information, registration costs, and other details, please visit http://www.arcsa.org/.

A national network of 33 university-based Sea Grant programs serve coastal communities by identifying, funding, and interpreting the results of scientific research and is dedicated to helping citizens utilize scientific information to support a vibrant economy while ensuring ecological sustainability. In addition to sustainable water practices, Sea Grant programs focus on critical issues such as hazard resilience, healthy coastal ecosystems, sustainable coastal development, sustainable seafood, and sustainable coastal tourism.

The American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1994 in Austin, Texas to promote sustainable rainwater harvesting practices to help solve potable, non-potable, stormwater, and energy challenges throughout the world. Members include professionals working in city, state, and federal government, academia, manufacturers and suppliers of rainwater harvesting equipment, consultants, and other interested individuals. To learn more about ARCSA and its work nationwide on sustainable water practices and rainwater harvesting please visit http://www.arcsa.org/, email info@arcsa.org, or call (512) 617-6528.

To learn more about UH Sea Grant and the many ways it is serving coastal communities throughout Hawai‘i and the Pacific please visit http://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu, email uhsgcomm@hawaii.edu, call (808) 956-7410, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube.

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The University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program is part of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s prestigious School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology. It supports an innovative program of research, education and extension services directed to the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources of the state, region and nation. Science serving Hawai‘i and the Pacific for over 40 years.