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Directorate of Public Works

Harvesting the record rainwater for use

BY CATHY HAMILTON-WISSMER

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Some of the record rainwater we received over the spring is being put to use on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Rainwater harvesting happens at 11 different locations on JBLM.

Rainwater harvesting describes a process in which precipitation that falls on a site is diverted, captured and stored for use on-site as opposed to allowing it to run off, evaporate or infiltrate into the soil. JBLM captures rooftop rainwater in above-ground cisterns for use in urinals and toilets and in underground cisterns for use in irrigation.

Buildings 9511 and 9517 in the General Dynamics complex were certified as Gold in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design in 2013 and are currently occupied by General Dynamics for maintenance of Strykers.

The two Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facilities each have enormous cisterns designed to capture 18,300 gallons of rainwater run-off.

The rooftop collection system takes advantage of gutters to direct rainwater to the cistern. Recovered water is stored in a series of above-ground tanks, are filtered for sediment removal and then have to pass through a ultraviolet disinfection process to control microbial growth. It is then used for toilet flushing.

Aryn Bauer, who will graduate from Oregon State University's fisheries and sustainability program this month, and Nicole Glauberg, who graduated from Clover Park Technical College's environmental technician program in March, worked together to map and inspect all of the rainwater cisterns on JBLM.

Both are spouses of active-duty military service members and fulfilled internship requirements for their respective degrees with the JBLM Directorate of Public Works environmental division.

"Their invaluable efforts to develop a cistern portfolio consisting of (Geographic Information System) identification, facility designs and drawings, maintenance and technical manuals, and current operational status of rainwater cisterns have contributed significantly to the establishment of a JBLM rainwater harvesting maintenance and operation program," said Becky Kowalski, JBLM stormwater program manager. "This effort aids in meeting a condition of the JBLM Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit."

JBLM is committed to further utilization of captured rainwater harvesting for use in irrigation.

For updates on how JBLM continues to make strides in sustainability check out the sustainable JBLM web and Facebook Page. People interested in volunteering or for possible intern opportunities with JBLM's Directorate of Public Works can call 253-966-1734.

More information

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Becky Kowalski

Stormwater program manager, JBLM Directorate of Public Works

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