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# Sustainable Development — Water Conservation

## Background

The AIA Washington Council supports the wise development and use of our state's resources. In 2005, the Washington Legislature passed the High Performance Public Buildings Act, to require that state-funded buildings be designed and built to higher environmental and efficiency standards. Sustainable buildings are only one facet of sustainable development. State laws should also promote the redevelopment of previously used sites for new purposes, including brownfields and other currently contaminated sites. And, state law should promote energy, water and resource conservation in building development and operations.

Across Washington State the lack of available water is hampering growth and slowing economic development. Cities and counties in all areas of the state are running out of water rights, limiting their ability to accommodate more housing, businesses and industry. The use of reclaimed water and captured rainwater can supplement existing water supplies to support more development while protecting our environment and conserving natural resources.

## Support HB 2884 — Establishes New Rules for the Use of Reclaimed Water

Reclaimed water is an effluent derived from a wastewater treatment system that has been treated to be suitable for a beneficial use or a controlled use that otherwise would not occur. The use of reclaimed water can expand existing water supplies and improve the health of our state's lakes, rivers and aquifers. If put directly into rivers and streams, treated water can warm waterways and hurt fish habitats. The beneficial use of reclaimed water filters it through natural systems prior to reintroduction in the groundwater.

HB 2884 requires the Department of Ecology in coordination with the Department of Health to develop rules for the use of reclaimed water by 2010.

## Support the use of Rainwater Catchment Systems

Runoff, or non-point source, pollution is caused by rainwater taking with it pollutants from roads, rooftops, and other impervious surfaces. The pollutants are not filtered out naturally, so they flow into surface water. Impervious surfaces also prevent rainwater from sinking into the soil to replenish the groundwater supply and create a greater volume of runoff at a more rapid pace than under natural conditions. This may result in a higher frequency of flooding and erosion, which contributes to more runoff. All these factors increase pollutants in our waterways and water supply.

Rainwater catchment systems capture rainwater and stormwater runoff and reuse it on a building site. This capturing prevents runoff that can cause erosion, flooding and overtax combined sewer systems and water treatment systems. Water captured is put back into the water treatment system or naturally filtered onsite overtime. Rainwater harvesting can also reduce the need to draw water for treatment from rivers, lakes, aquifers and other sources.

State law on the use of rainwater catchment systems is unclear. Even so, hundreds of such systems have been installed, saving millions of gallons of water each year. The use of captured rainwater decreases the demand for treated water and lessens the demands on water from rivers, lakes and aquifers. AIA/WA supports changing state law to specifically exempt rainwater catchment systems from the need for a "water right" permit.

*AIA/WA is working with a broad group of stakeholders to develop legislation for 2007.*