



DC Clean Rivers Project (DCCR)

Downspout Disconnection (DRAIN the RAIN) - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DRAIN the RAIN!

Q. Why should I disconnect?

A. Like many other cities, the older portions of the District's sewer system carries both sewage and stormwater in a combined sewer system. During storms, a combined sewer system can be overwhelmed, and sewage and stormwater can overflow into our local waterways. This overflow is called combined sewer overflow (CSO). CSOs release pollutants and can be harmful to the environment. Downspouts connected to the combined sewer system add to the CSO problem. Disconnecting your downspout helps reduce CSOs by reducing the amount of stormwater entering the sewer system. It can also help you save money on water bills by reducing water usage, if you disconnect to a rain barrel.

Q. Do I have to participate?

A. DC Water's Program is completely voluntary.

Q. What is the cost to participate in the Program? Who disconnects the downspout?

A. There is no cost to participate in the Program. All work will be completed by trained and experienced personnel of the local non-profit organization, Rock Creek Conservancy. The homeowner must give approval for work to be completed.

Q. How do I know if I'm eligible to participate? Where is the project area?

A. DC Water's Downspout Disconnection Program only applies to properties within the pilot areas with downspouts that are connected to the combined sewer system that meet criteria for disconnection. If your downspout is connected, there is adequate pervious space for runoff to flow, and runoff will flow away from the building, you may be eligible.

This pilot phase will take place in both the Potomac River and Rock Creek project locations. The project locations are displayed on the maps at dcwater.com/draintherain. You can also contact DC Water to learn if you are in the project area and for a free home assessment to determine your eligibility.

Email: draintherain@dcwater.com

Phone: 202-787-4142

Website: dcwater.com/draintherain

Q. Will rain barrels be provided?

- A.** If you disconnect through DC Water’s Program, your property is eligible for one free rain barrel.

If you do not participate in our Program or are already disconnected and would like a rain barrel, the District’s Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) RiverSmart Program may have options for you. For more information, visit doee.dc.gov/riversmart.

Q. Will installing a rain barrel attract mosquitos?

- A.** No. The provided rain barrels have a fully-enclosed system preventing mosquito infestation.

Q. Will disconnecting my downspout cause flooding?

- A.** No. Only downspouts that meet the downspout disconnection criteria in DOEE’s Stormwater Guidebook will be disconnected. A downspout will not be disconnected if it could create a hazard. The water from the downspout will not be directed onto a neighbor’s property, a sidewalk, right of way area or any area that can cause flooding issues.

Q. What maintenance is required?

- A.** Typical maintenance tasks include keeping gutters and downspouts free of leaves and other debris and emptying rain barrels after major rain events (if a soaker hose is not connected to the rain barrel).

Q. Can I get other discounts by participating?

- A.** Disconnecting a downspout may qualify a property for discounts on two fees: up to 55% off the DC Government Stormwater Fee and up to 4% off the DC Water’s Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge (CRIAC). For eligible properties that participate in the Downspout Disconnection Program, DC Water will enroll the property for discounts. Enrollment is done quarterly and homeowners must re-enroll themselves every three years. More information is at doee.dc.gov/riversmartrewards.

Q. How is DC Water informing the community about the project?

- A.** DC Water will attend community meetings and events in the project location, send targeted mailers to promote the Program, and conduct door-to-door canvassing for potentially-eligible homes.

Q. How is the DRAIN the RAIN funded?

- A.** The Green Infrastructure Program and Drain the Rain are being implemented through DC Clean Rivers Project that is funded by ratepayers (DC Water customers) through the DC Water Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge (IAC) included in the monthly DC Water bill.

Q. What is the DC Clean Rivers Project?

- A.** The Clean Rivers Project is DC Water’s ongoing program to reduce combined sewer overflows into the District’s waterways- the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and Rock Creek. The Project is a massive infrastructure and support program designed to capture and clean water during heavy rainfalls before it ever reaches our rivers. The project includes tunnels, sewer separation, and green infrastructure. More information can be found at dcwater.com/cleanriversproject.

Q. What is Green Infrastructure (GI)?

A. GI technologies mimic natural processes by capturing, slowing, and cleaning stormwater before it enters the sewer system. GI technologies provide benefits beyond traditional sewer solutions, by providing environmental benefits in the form of habitat for birds and pollinators, clean air, and clean water; social benefits by enhancing community space; and economic benefits through local jobs creation and increased property values. Examples of other GI techniques include permeable pavements, green roofs, and bioretention or rain gardens. Information about the DC Water Green Infrastructure Program can be found at dcwater.com/green.

Q. I'm interested in other green infrastructure (GI) practices on my property or I do not live in the project area. What can I do?

A. If you would like other GI such as rain gardens, green roofs, and pervious pavers or if you are not currently eligible for DC Water's Downspout Disconnection Program, the District's Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) RiverSmart Program may have options for you. Visit doee.dc.gov/riversmart to learn about their programs for GI.

Q. Who is Rock Creek Conservancy and what is its mission?

A. Work will be completed by DC Water-hired contractor, Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC). RCC is a 501(c)(3) organization that works to restore Rock Creek and its parklands as a natural oasis for all people to appreciate and protect. As RCC seeks to improve the health of Rock Creek, it manages stormwater in cooperation with local citizens, landowners, and government officials. Downspout disconnection supports the cleanup of the District's waterways by preventing stormwater from entering rivers and streams and allowing it to soak into the ground. For more information about RCC, visit www.rockcreekconservancy.org.

Q. Why was I not contacted directly by a canvasser or through a mailer?

A. Initial field investigations from the right-of-way identified properties that may be eligible within the pilot project locations. DC Water is happy to further evaluate your home if you were not contacted. If you are interested and think you may be eligible, contact us at:
Email: draintherain@dcwater.com
Phone: 202-787-4142
Website: dcwater.com/draintherain

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