

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## FIGHTING FLOODS & DROUGHT ONE ROOF AT A TIME

***#LAsStormCatcher pilot shows how 1.2 million local homes could be ready to reduce LA County's flood risk, boost local water supply and clean rivers and beaches.***

PROJECT WEBSITE: <https://www.treepeople.org/lawatercollaborative>

LOS ANGELES (February 17, 2017)—A storm system coming through Los Angeles today could bring more than four inches of rain and with it a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate how homeowners can reduce urban runoff and capture water for the drier days ahead.

In 2014, Southern California's driest year on record, the paltry 3.36 inches of rain that fell on LA City still amounted to billions of gallons of potential runoff to be captured and added to local supplies. While existing County efforts to capture and reuse rainwater provide nearly a third of the region's drinking water supply, significant amounts still end up flushed down the LA and San Gabriel rivers into the ocean.

There are many solutions to this problem including larger, centralized stormwater capture projects that will increase groundwater pumping by an estimated 4.9 billion gallons per year in the San Fernando Groundwater Basin. Smaller, localized stormwater capture and reuse projects will provide an additional 652 million gallons -- among them #LAsStormCatcher, a pilot program

which links six retrofitted homes located at sites across South LA and the San Fernando Valley that take a “high-and-low tech” approach to collecting rainwater.

The pilot could play a revolutionary role in combating the effects of climate change -- such as prolonged water shortages followed by severe storm events.

The homes have been adapted to direct rain from rooftops into large tanks or cisterns with capacities between 840 to 3,962 gallons that are monitored and controlled electronically.

“Imagine a series of small, virtual reservoirs distributed across the LA Basin with the ability to harvest a previously untapped source of water,” said Mark Pestrella, acting director of Los Angeles County Public Works.

#LAStormCatcher uses cutting-edge Real Time Controls (RTC) and cloud-based software to release water according to forecast rainfall, returning water to underground aquifers and capturing coming rains. During drier times, the stored water can be used to irrigate landscapes. A [mobile accessible online dashboard](#) lets participating homeowners monitor rain tank levels and total water captured to-date.

“It’s Stone Age meets Information Age,” TreePeople Founder & President Andy Lipkis said.

#LAStormcatcher was created by the Greater LA Water Collaborative, a partnership between the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, and the City’s Bureau of Sanitation, with facilitation by environmental organization TreePeople and engineering firm Tetra Tech.

Rigorous analysis of pilot site data found that 1.2 million of the County’s 1.5 million single-family homes are well-suited to capture rainfall using cisterns and rain gardens. If we assume every eligible home is retrofitted with the cloud-controlled cisterns, up to 30 billion gallons or 10 percent of the region’s current residential water demand could be captured as runoff from these rooftops.

#LAStormCatcher data also shows that capturing runoff from the region’s residential rooftops could reduce pollution to our waterways and beaches from heavy metals like zinc by 15 percent.

Currently, LA County captures enough rainwater in a year to meet the needs of 2 million people, and ambitious plans from the DWP’s Stormwater Capture Master Plan outline the potential [for up to 45 percent of LA’s total water supply](#) to be captured locally if the right programs and projects are implemented. #LAStormCatcher is one of those programs.

“Let’s think big! 1.2 million rooftops in L.A. County could be viable for this system. That represents 17 percent of our region’s hardscape. We need to transform our relationship with water, and maximize stormwater capture to make Los Angeles sustainable, address flooding

and clean our waterways,” said Enrique C. Zaldivar, P.E., Director and General Manager, LA Sanitation.

#LAStormCatcher emerged from growing cross-agency cooperation, which shows how integrated planning for regional water challenges can generate significant efficiencies and benefits. With longtime LA nonprofit TreePeople facilitating communication and investigation with the engineering firm Tetra Tech, #LAStormCatcher provides a real life example of how to create 21st-century solutions to climate change.

“In the end, this pilot proves that Southern Californians have a role to play in building a climate-resilient future,” said Senior Assistant General Manager of Water for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Richard Harasick. “More water captured from rainfall means less water taken from our reservoirs and less reliance on distant snowpacks.”

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#### **About the Greater LA Water Collaborative:**

The Greater LA Water Collaborative is a groundbreaking partnership between the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, and the City’s Bureau of Sanitation, facilitated by environmental nonprofit TreePeople and engineering firm Tetra Tech, designed to strategically respond to the water challenges facing the region. Formed in 2013, it seeks to develop solutions to projected long-term water shortages and mounting threats to public health and safety posed by the impacts of climate change.

For more information, visit [treepeople.org/LAWaterCollaborative](http://treepeople.org/LAWaterCollaborative).

#### **ON-SITE INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH TREEPEOPLE SPOKESPERSON**

Broadcast Quality Footage:

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n1l09p3klgylih0/AABwtuh9Tp\\_1poTa4AgRuYZTa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n1l09p3klgylih0/AABwtuh9Tp_1poTa4AgRuYZTa?dl=0)

High Resolution Images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9gd6g2d87ro4k3c/AAAzElpDeBRKbOuktLOOKKLta?dl=0>

For more information, see these two videos below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-YWe9ALDCI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHBskVuBAh0>