



Environmental Issues in Real Estate

Drywells and sustainability, do they mix?

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This is a question that CES has been pondering for quite some time. Basically, the short answer is no. Because of the purpose of the drywell and the way it is constructed, it will at some point in time, inject pollution into the subsurface soils. If annual inspections and maintenance are performed there will still be points in time where damage has occurred to the drywell to allow the pollution into the ground. These actions will significantly reduce the amount of pollution we are putting directly into the ground. The problems begin to reveal themselves when looking at how often drywells are inspected and serviced. Simply going by the numbers, right now there are about 45,000 registered drywells injecting storm water into the ground. The reality is far more sobering. There are at a minimum twice the number of registered drywells that remain unregistered here in Arizona. That means around 80,000 drywells are unregistered and are unlikely being inspected or serviced. A majority of these drywells are right here in Maricopa County. Approximately 60-80% of the total number of drywells are in our work places, gas stations, schools, parks, and shopping centers. The next time you are out, look for that round grated hole in the ground marked "Storm Water Only" and ask yourself, is this one registered? There is a good chance it isn't.



Many drywells do not operate as designed due to a lack of maintenance or a lack of understanding

Its gone. So now it's no longer my problem or is it?

CERCLA is a comprehensive program that promotes the "cradle to grave" mentality. Just because you followed all the rules in disposing your waste it doesn't mean that you are no longer responsible for any contamination. This became very evident in California recently. A used drum company received empty drums that formally contained hazardous or regulated materials. They washed and reconditioned these drums for reuse. The waste that resulted from the washing and reconditioning was not properly handled or disposed of. Soil and ground water contamination resulted and the site was placed on the federal superfund list in 2001. In February 2009 the current owners of the site were named as a responsible party to the contamination also the 41 companies that sent their drums to this facility did as well. Because the material residues contained in those drums ultimately were not disposed of properly, the contents never made it to the "grave" and therefore contributed to the contamination. All 41 companies are now on the hook for paying for part of the cleanup or paying attorneys to fight it. Either way they are going to pay something. For more information visit the EPA's web site at [Cooper Drum NPL Site](#).



Nearly every buying decision we make can have long lasting environmental consequences.

The Green Corner - Green tips for April

Buying sustainable and American is one of the best green things we can do as a country. I happened to be watching a television show on sustainability not too long ago and there was a story on inexpensive cashmere from China. Cashmere from China is very inexpensive and as a result there is a substantial increase in demand for this low cost variety. The problems are resulting from the tremendous increase in the cashmere goat population to the point that they are overgrazing huge areas of grasslands, turning them into deserts. The problem is further exacerbated due to the tendency of the goat to not only eat the grass but dig out the roots to consume. If this continues, irreparable damage will be done to the environment and the cost to our planet will be incalculable. If we simply buy products from companies here in the US or from companies that promote sustainability, we will do our green part!

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