

DRAFT

DATE

Mark Landman
Chair, Board of Directors
Russian River Watershed Association

Subject: Support of Concept: To evaluate the feasibility of an extended producer responsibility ordinance that addresses the long-term need for safe medicine disposal options for our communities

Dear Chairman Landman,

The Water Advisory Committee (WAC) to Sonoma County Water Agency appreciates the Russian River Watershed Association's (RRWA) strong support of the concept of pharmaceutical producer responsibility for the creation, funding, and management of a regional program that will provide safe and convenient disposal options of expired and unwanted pharmaceuticals for consumers.

Pharmaceuticals are collected in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties through the Safe Medicine Disposal Program. Funding for the Program is provided by RRWA, the City of Santa Rosa's subregional system, the Sonoma County Water Agency, and others. Since the Program's inception in 2007, over 90,000 pounds of pharmaceuticals have been collected and properly disposed, demonstrating a considerable demand for disposal options. The collection totals have increased every year, so it is logical to project that the collection totals will continue to increase. The cost to manage the program and conduct outreach and education is also projected to increase year to year. Currently, there is no long term plan for funding.

For too long, local government, by default, has carried the burden of financing and managing pharmaceutical take-back programs, broadly financed by taxpayers or utility ratepayers. Despite these efforts, pharmaceuticals are either being stockpiled in medicine cabinets, a prime target for drug abusers; or flushed down the toilet, threatening our water quality, as even the most advanced wastewater treatment processes cannot remove all pharmaceuticals. It is time for the producers to take the responsibility of properly managing the pharmaceutical products that they create.

In 2012, Alameda County became the first local government in the United States to pass legislation requiring pharmaceutical companies to design, fund, and operate a program to safely collect and dispose of unwanted drugs. Subsequently, in California, the City and County of San Francisco, the County of San Mateo and the County of Santa Clara have adopted similar drug stewardship programs. There is currently no mandatory statewide drug stewardship program for unwanted household drugs in California.

A manufacturer-funded collection and disposal program for unwanted drugs would significantly increase convenient disposal options for Sonoma County residents' unwanted drugs, enabling collection of larger quantities of unwanted drugs and reducing the risks to public safety, health, and the environment.

For these reasons, the WAC strongly supports the concept of pharmaceutical producers taking an active role in the creation, funding, and management of a regional program that will provide safe and convenient disposal options of expired and unwanted pharmaceuticals for consumers.

Chair, Water Advisory Committee