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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance Passes in Contra Costa County

Wastewater, Substance Abuse Prevention, Suicide Prevention, and Environmental Agencies Support Passage

Martinez, CA (December 20, 2016) -- The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors today passed a Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance requiring medication manufacturers to create a stewardship organization that will offer convenient drop-off locations throughout unincorporated areas of the county for safe disposal of unwanted, expired, and unused medications.

Convenient locations include pharmacies and hospitals.

This is the eighth Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance adopted in the Bay Area and the 13th in the nation. Safe Drug Disposal ordinances have gained significant interest from government agencies and non-government organizations because they provide a wide public benefit. Wastewater agencies have collaborated on this issue with clean water advocates because proper disposal of medications means cleaner waterways for fish and wildlife and increased quality of drinking water.

"It's our job to be strong stewards for the environment," said Roger Bailey, General Manager of Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (Central San), which operates 13 customer-funded medication drop-off bins in Contra Costa County and has been a strong advocate for this ordinance. "This ordinance helps better protect public health and the environment," Bailey said.

Central San and six wastewater agencies, including City of Richmond's Water Resource Recovery Department, Delta Diablo, Dublin San Ramon Services District, Ironhouse Sanitary

District, Mt. View Sanitary District, and West County Wastewater District, provided strong east, west and central county support of the ordinance.

Suicide prevention and drug overdose prevention advocates also supported the ordinance. “The majority of those who abuse medications obtain them from friends and family and often right from their home medicine cabinets. The ordinance will require more medication disposal bins and increase community education, both important steps in reducing access to potentially dangerous and addictive medications in Contra Costa County,” said April Rovero, Executive Director of the National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse.

Key Elements of Ordinance

1. The ordinance places responsibility on medication manufacturers to be a solution in helping reduce medications entering local waterways.
2. The new drop-off bins will accept all medications, including over-the-counter drugs.
3. Medication manufacturers are subject to penalties if they fail to comply with the ordinance.

Since 2012, outgoing Contra Costa County Supervisor Mary Piepho led the charge for an ordinance for the county. “Thanks to the leadership of Supervisor Mary Piepho and all the members of the Board, the pharmaceutical industry will provide county residents with safe and convenient disposal options in pharmacies and hospitals like they now do in six other Bay Area counties,” said Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council.

County supervisors adopted the ordinance at Supervisor Piepho’s last official meeting, allowing for a strong end to her political career as she passes the baton to incoming District III Supervisor, Diane Burgis.

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