

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
November 12, 2008

- ITEM: 5
- SUBJECT: Resolution in support of the “No Drugs Down the Drain” Campaign for pharmaceutical medication disposal in the San Diego Region (Tentative Order No. R9-2008-0128)
- PURPOSE: To adopt tentative Resolution No. R9-2008-0128 (Supporting Document No. 1), to minimize the discharge of pharmaceutical compounds to receiving waters through education on proper disposal alternatives in the San Diego region.
- PUBLIC NOTICE: Notification of this action was posted on the Regional Board web page on October 24, and was included in the November 12, 2008 agenda notice, which was mailed on October 24, 2008.
- DISCUSSION: Everyday in California, unwanted prescription and non-prescription medications are disposed of in the sanitary sewer system. While this was once recommended practice to prevent unintended use, studies show that pharmaceuticals can pass through wastewater treatment facilities into receiving waters. In 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey reported that there were pharmaceutical compounds detected in 80% of waterways tested throughout the U.S. Pharmaceuticals reach receiving waters either via direct disposal to the sewer system, or through normal human (and livestock) excretion. Pharmaceuticals that have not been metabolized (i.e. direct disposal) contribute higher doses to the receiving waters.
- Because many of these compounds are designed to be effective in small doses, there is concern that they may have cumulative impacts on water quality and wildlife. There is also concern that pharmaceutical compounds in large concentrations may adversely affect the operations of biological wastewater treatment systems. Many pharmaceutical compounds in trace amounts cannot be removed through conventional wastewater treatment processes. Additional treatment processes would be extremely expensive, and often times infeasible. Therefore

the best approach for minimizing the impacts to receiving waters from pharmaceutical compounds is source control.

To address this issue, a coalition of local, regional, state and federal agencies joined forces to conduct an annual, week-long, California-wide educational campaign to educate the public that disposing of unused or expired medication down the drain is no longer advisable. The campaign, "No Drugs Down the Drain!" highlights to the public information on alternative disposal options. The recommended disposal option referenced in the campaign is through local "take-back" programs.

This item was originally scheduled for Board approval on October 8, 2008 to coincide with the 2008 campaign week, October 4-11, 2008. Prior to and during the campaign, the Regional Board website provided a link to the campaign web-site (www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org) which contains information on proper disposal alternatives and take-back locations. Although the 2008 campaign is over, the intent of the campaign is to perpetuate efforts for proper disposal, and the website remains updated and operational.

The Tentative Resolution offers to assist the campaign efforts by continuing to provide a link from the Regional Board website to www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org, and by directing the Executive Officer to send a letter to the sewer collection and treatment agencies in the region, requesting that they assist in educating the public and sponsoring pharmaceutical "take-back" programs within their service areas. To date, the only Cities that offer such programs in the Region are the cities of San Diego, Coronado, and Imperial Beach.

No comments on this item have been received, to date.

COMPLIANCE
RECORD:

Not applicable.

SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES:

Not applicable.

KEY ISSUES:

None.

LEGAL CONCERNS:

None.

SUPPORTING DOCS: 1. Tentative Resolution No. R9-2008-0128
 2. USGS Fact Sheet

RECOMMENDATION: Adoption of tentative Resolution No. R9-2008-0128 is
 recommended.