



For Immediate Release  
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### **Take-Back Program for Unwanted Medicines Launches in Summit County**

In partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency Region 8, two local organizations will help launch a "Take-Back Program" for unwanted medicines for Summit County residents and visitors starting December 1, 2009.

The Summit Water Quality Committee (SWQC) and High Country Conservation Center (HC3) have joined forces with City Market to get the program started locally at the Breckenridge and Dillon City Market pharmacies. Intended to help reduce the amount of pharmaceuticals entering our water supplies, this program is part of a broader pilot project in Colorado. Other collection boxes will be located at several King Soopers stores and other locations in the Denver metro area.

"We are very excited that Summit County can be a part of this initial pilot project," said Carly Wier, director of the High Country Conservation Center, "This is another key program for our community to help get potentially harmful materials out of our waste stream."

Secure, tamper-proof boxes similar to library or video drop-boxes will be located near the pharmacies in each of Summit County's City Market stores. Residents and visitors can safely dispose of household medications, including prescription drugs and over-the-counter products, for free in these boxes.

The program cannot accept narcotics, controlled substances, needles, or medications from clinics, hospitals or nursing homes. A specialized disposal company, Curbside, Inc., will collect, shred, and incinerate the medications in a licensed facility.

"Because the old wisdom was to flush unwanted medications, traces of pharmaceuticals are potentially entering our water supplies and environment," noted Lane Wyatt, administrator of the Summit Water Quality Committee, "and we are just starting to learn of the effects of these types of materials in our water ecosystems."

Pharmaceuticals are part of an emerging group of chemicals, which also includes personal care products like lotions, shampoos, soaps and cosmetics, that scientists are studying in drinking and surface water. Some studies have indicated that many of these compounds may act as weak estrogen or endocrine disruptors, sometimes causing deformities and reproductive side effects in fish, reptiles, and even birds.

"Certain fish populations have been found to exhibit conditions that indicate biological impairment is occurring, which is evidenced by fish populations with low male-to-female sex ratios and individual fish having both female and male reproductive organs (intersex fish)," noted Jean Mackenzie, Remedial Project Manager with the EPA

Region 8. Additional studies from independent scientists and the US Geological Survey have found more evidence of feminized fish throughout the nation.

Part of the problem is that 50-90 percent of active ingredients in medicines are not absorbed by the body, resulting in more than 100 different pharmaceuticals being identified in surface and drinking water as they pass through waste water treatment facilities.

However, a significant portion of these materials come from consumers flushing unwanted medicines. Wastewater treatment plants are not equipped for pharmaceutical and personal care product removal.

“The nature of these medicines and compounds are highly complex and varied and wastewater treatment plants are not engineered to remove them from our wastewater,” Wyatt explained. “This is a new, emerging issue in wastewater treatment that we are watching, but the best, most effective treatment is to not flush unwanted medicines and keep them out of the system at the source when possible.”

“We are hopeful that once Summit County residents understand the need for proper disposal of unused and expired medications and utilize the take back boxes, water quality conditions will improve in the watershed,” Mackenzie added.

SWQC will conduct a water sampling project in Summit County to look for traces of pharmaceuticals and personal care products. Results will be compared after two years of offering the collection boxes to the public to determine if they have been successful in reducing these compounds in our water supplies.

For more information or to get involved in promoting the program, residents are invited to visit the High Country Conservation Center’s website or contact them at (970) 668-5703.

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#### **DETAILS:**

Medication Take-Back Boxes

Breckenridge City Market Pharmacy & Dillon City Market Pharmacy

Begins: December 1, 2009

FREE

Accepted Items: Prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, medication samples, medications for pets, vitamins, medicated ointments/lotions, liquid medication in glass or leak-proof containers, inhalers

Items NOT Accepted: Narcotics and other controlled substances, needles, thermometers, IV bags, bloody or infectious waste, personal care products, business waste, empty containers, plastic bags, hydrogen peroxide, aerosol cans