



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 10/14/2025

To: Board of Supervisors, Board of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency

Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency, Health Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Grant Davis 707-547-1900, Andrea Rodriguez 707-521-1837, Nolan Sullivan 707-565-4774

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): All

Recommended Action:

Adopt A Gold Resolution for the Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative

Executive Summary:

The Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative is composed of staff and member agencies from the Russian River Watershed Association, Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Sonoma Water, Zero Waste Sonoma, the Cities of Santa Rosa and Petaluma, and Mendocino County Waste Management.

The Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative group came together nearly 20 years ago to address a significant public health issue plaguing our communities and environment, found ways to share costs, educated our constituencies and decision-makers, and continually provided our County and watershed residents with safe and free access to disposing of medicines and sharps.

The Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative group influenced a statewide law that shifted financial burdens from local municipalities and water/wastewater utilities to the pharmaceutical industry.

The Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative's Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal work helped pave the way to a statewide patchwork of programs, including in Sonoma and Mendocino counties, that led to the passage of SB212 in 2018, which became effective in 2021. SB212 established safe and convenient collection and disposal options for covered drugs and home-generated sharps waste, and requires producers (manufacturers, distributors, re-packagers, the owner or licensee of a covered product, or importers), to design, fund, and implement stewardship programs for the proper collection and disposal of covered products in California.

The Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative has educated communities about safe medication and sharp waste disposal; diverted thousands of pounds of unused and expired medicines to be safely collected and properly destroyed; developed a draft Sonoma County ordinance that would have required the pharmaceutical industry to fund the promotion, collection, and disposal of expired/unused medications; and participated in a statewide coalition of jurisdictions implementing similar local programs.

Discussion:

There is a considerable need to provide Sonoma County residents with safe and convenient methods for disposal of unwanted medicines and sharps using a sustainable model. Since 2005, local governmental agencies and ratepayer sewer service fees have funded various programs that collect and dispose of expired

medicine. In Sonoma County, the Safe Medicine Disposal Program was formed in 2007 and was collectively funded by the following partners: Cities of Cloverdale, Healdsburg, Petaluma and Santa Rosa; Town of Windsor; Russian River Watershed Association (RRWA); Sonoma Water; and the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency. Approximately \$71,600 was spent annually on the collection, handling, and disposal of consumer-generated medications by the program partners and \$21,400 for consumer-generated sharps paid by the former Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (now Zero Waste Sonoma).

Since the Safe Medicine Disposal Program began in 2007, the amount of medications collected had continued to grow annually, starting with 3,165 pounds in 2008 to over 19,500 pounds in 2015. These local programs had collected more than 148,000 pounds of pharmaceutical drug waste since their inception until 2021. Each year, the demand increased for more collection bins and bin locations, which were funded through the Safe Medicine Disposal Program partners. A public education and information campaign accompanied the local disposal program. Safe Medication disposal collection sites were located at participating local pharmacies and law enforcement agency sites.

In July 2012, Alameda County became the first local government in the United States to adopt an ordinance requiring pharmaceutical producers to design, fund, and operate a safe medicine collection and management program. Alameda County's ordinance became a model for other jurisdictions. In December 2012, the pharmaceutical industry filed a lawsuit attempting to block implementation. After the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the ordinance in 2015, multiple other localities enacted similar ordinances, without legal challenge.

Between September 2015 and January 2016, the Executive Director and Chair of the Russian River Watershed Association visited City and Town Councils throughout Sonoma County to deliver a presentation about options for improving and expanding the regional safe collection and disposal of unused and expired medications. In response, all nine incorporated City and Town councils signed letters of conceptual support for a countywide Extended Producer Responsibility Ordinance for medicines. The Russian River Watershed Association, Sonoma Water, Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, Health Services, and the Cities of Santa Rosa and Petaluma formed a collaborative (Collaborative) to study and develop a Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Ordinance for Sonoma County.

On October 4, 2016, the Board of Supervisors directed Health Services and Sonoma Water staff, in collaboration with all local jurisdictions and the Safe Medicine Disposal Collaborative partners, to develop a local Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Ordinance that would be amenable to all the county jurisdictions. With this direction, staff and Collaborative partners researched and developed a proposed model ordinance to establish a Safe Medicine Disposal Program within the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. Health Services and Sonoma Water staff and other Collaborative members gathered stakeholder input and comments through meetings and discussions about the proposed Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Ordinance.

On September 12, 2017, staff and Collaborative partners updated the Board on the proposal development. The Board directed staff and Collaborative partners to return with a Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Ordinance for the Board's consideration that included sharps as a covered product as well as to provide additional clarifying information about the magnitude of unwanted medication and unwanted sharps in the County and the methodology for the proposed convenience standards.

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Health Services and Sonoma Water staff were prepared to return to the Board in October 2018 for the first reading of the Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Ordinance. Local governments in California had a patchwork of ordinances in place and more jurisdictions (including Sonoma County) were preparing to move forward with their own ordinances. Pressure put on the pharmaceutical industry led to the passage of statewide legislation which established a comprehensive statewide take-back system for sharps and medications. Senate Bill (SB) 212, sponsored by the California Product Stewardship Council, was authored by Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson (Santa Barbara) and was signed by Governor Brown in September 2018. CalRecycle established the regulations to carry out the directives of SB 212.

Due to the passage of SB 212, the Department of Health Services and Sonoma Water did not proceed with the ordinance item since a statewide program was about to be implemented. SB 212 preempted future local ordinances to ensure consistency and predictability for manufacturers.

Before the passage of SB 212, the financial cost of managing the Safe Medicine Disposal Program had fallen on local Sonoma and Mendocino County jurisdictions, including local jurisdictions through RRWA. By shifting the responsibility for collection and disposal from public entities to private stewardship groups, California's Pharmaceutical and Sharps Waste Stewardship Law saves taxpayer money and local resources. The Stewardship Law also promotes the circular economy, by mandating that manufacturers consider end-of-life disposal in the design and management of their products.

The Department of Health Services returned to the Board on December 11, 2018, to provide an update on how the newly passed legislation changed the need for an ordinance, what the differences were, and how it was going to be implemented in the County.

The Safe Medication Disposal Collaborative assured that the transition from the local program to the state program went smoothly. The Safe Medication Disposal Collaborative members worked with the state stewardship organizations and with community partners to transition the local program to the state program.

The members continue to promote the industry-run statewide stewardship program that provides safe and convenient disposal options for pharmaceutical and home-generated sharps waste at no cost to the consumer. Sonoma County residents are directed to the Safe Medicine Disposal Program website <https://www.safemedicinedisposal.org> and Zero Waste Sonoma's webpage <https://zerowastesonoma.gov/materials/pharmaceuticals?locale=en> to find convenient and free disposal options.

Prior Board Actions:

- 12/11/2018 Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Update
- 09/12/2017 Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance Update and Direction
- 10/04/2016 Safe Medicine Disposal - Extended Producer Responsibility Study Session
- 04/01/2008 Resolution 08-0292 Adopted Supporting

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

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N/A

Attachments:

Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None.