CONTAMINANTS OF EMERGING CONCERN: PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE
U. S. EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant Overview

In September 2010, the University of Wisconsin Extension received a two-year grant from the US EPA to improve the health of the Great Lakes by reducing the amount of waste containing persistent toxic substances. With a focus on consumer-generated pharmaceutical waste, the grant will allow Wisconsin to develop a comprehensive pharmaceutical waste collection program for Wisconsin, along with creating awareness and educational materials to lay the groundwork for a product stewardship solution throughout five Western Great Lakes states. By reducing or eliminating toxic substances at their source, this grant will help curb much of the long-term capital investment being spent on regulation, control and clean up.

Key tasks of the initiative include expanding Wisconsin’s pilot mail back collection program throughout the 36 Wisconsin counties in the Great Lakes Watershed, developing working groups for surrounding states, distributing educational outreach materials, hosting local government forums, and communicating with various industries about a product stewardship option. The Wisconsin mail back program will serve about 2.5 million people living in the Great Lakes watershed.

A product stewardship solution will help develop the partnership between state and local governments, the healthcare industry, the pharmaceutical industry and the general public. A model product stewardship program will be developed based on the dialog between industry and our partners, as well as data collected from other states with parallel programs.

A key objective of this project is to save money by providing for a more cost effective collection system for unused pharmaceuticals by shifting some of the cost and responsibility to manufacturers. It will establish a blueprint for a sustainable program that addresses the life cycle of these contaminants, while improving water quality by reducing toxic discharges.

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Partners
IL IN Sea Grant Program (Sea Grant)
WI Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR)
Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)
Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Midwest Product Stewardship Council (MPSC)