



What's in the Water?

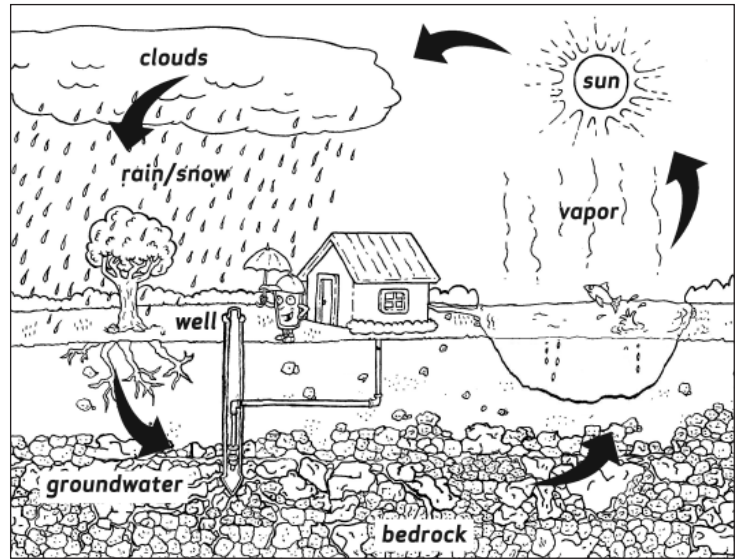
Pollutant Reduction Resources & Ideas for Utility Decision Makers

What do steroids, birth control, pain killers and insect repellent have in common? All of these chemicals and more have been detected in the nation's waterways.

Often labeled Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCP), these chemicals are part of a larger group of emerging contaminants being researched. One USGS study detected emerging contaminants in 80 percent of the streams and rivers sampled across 30 states.

According to a 2010 Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) report, persistent pollutants are "those that come from a wide variety of sources but linger in the environment and have a documented effect on human health, wildlife and aquatic habitat." In addition to PPCPs, DEQ's list of persistent pollutants includes chemicals used in pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, flame retardants, product coatings and chemicals released during combustion.

Increased awareness of chemical pollutants in the last decade is due, in part, to advancements in testing that allow researchers to better detect and understand the impacts of PPCP's and other persistent pollutants.



Water cycle graphic courtesy of U.S. EPA



Break the Pollutant Cycle

All Oregonians can take steps to prevent and reduce PPCPs and persistent pollutants in the environment. Drinking water and wastewater utilities are in a unique position to spread the word about reducing water pollutants. This flyer provides low cost and no cost ideas to help your utility get started.

Make Customer Education a Priority

- Many free public education resources are available and ready for distribution. Educational articles and brochures can be downloaded or ordered in hard copy. Check out these agencies and organizations to start:
 - "Water We Drink Campaign" at the National Environmental Services Center: www.nesc.wvu.edu/waterwedrink/
 - EPA: Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/index.html>
 - DEQ: Toxics Reduction Strategy, Drinking Water Protection Program: www.deq.state.or.us/programs.htm
 - Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Drinking Water Program: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/Pages/index.aspx>
 - American Water Works Association: www.awwa.org
 - Water Environment Federation: www.wef.org
 - Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies: www.oracwa.org
- Offer facility tours.
- Maximize outreach and resources by coordinating with other stakeholders. Get to know the local groups that may share your goals.
 - Local schools
 - Teachers may be interested in coordinating lesson plans with your public outreach.
 - High school and college interns can provide support to your goals while earning valuable experience and credit toward their degree.
 - Watershed councils: www.oregonwatersheds.org
 - Soil and water conservation districts: www.oacd.org

Businesses and Industrial Facilities

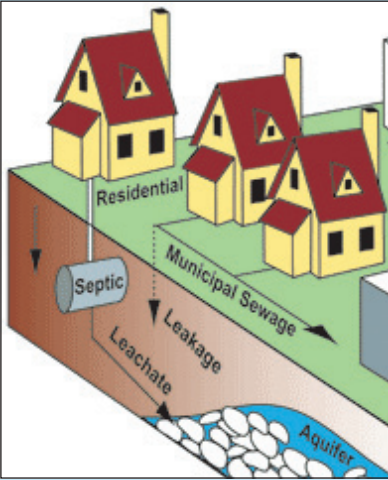
Work with your local Chamber of Commerce to education their members on pollution reduction and prevention strategies.

Encourage businesses and industries to reduce the pollution they create and follow best management practices. Reward those that do with a letter or certificate.

DEQ's Toxics Reduction Strategy and Assessment Programs can help.

Visit www.deq.state.or.us/toxics/

Source Water Protection Plans



Graphic courtesy of U.S. EPA

In Oregon, 62 permitted municipal wastewater treatment discharges are upstream of drinking water intakes.

Treating water and conducting site cleanups to remove contaminants can be costly. EPA estimates the cost of contaminant cleanup can range from 5 to 200 times the cost of basic prevention.

Review your source water assessment to start. Then create and implement a source water protection plan.

Guidance and assistance is offered by OHA's Drinking Water Program and DEQ's Drinking Water Protection Program.

Purchasing Policies

Make persistent pollutant reduction a priority at the utility by having policies that encourage the purchase of safer alternatives.

From the break room to the bathroom to plant operations, seek out safer alternatives to the products you already purchase.

EPA's Design for the Environment website can help you identify alternative products. Visit www.epa.gov/dfe/


This flyer is provided courtesy of:



RCAC
www.rcac.org

Visit our website for more information on environmental issues, housing, trainings and other resources!

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The Medicine Cabinet



Help reduce the pharmaceuticals entering the sewer systems and waterways and reduce the opportunity for accidental overdose or misuse of prescription drugs.

The U.S. consumes more prescription drugs than any other country in the world, with almost 65 percent of the population taking prescription medication.

For years, guidance on safe disposal has been to flush excess medication down the toilet; however, that is simply not a practice we can continue.

Coordinate with the police or sheriff's department to organize a prescription drug take back event and install a permanent collection box.



Septic Systems

According to DEQ, more than 30 percent of Oregonians depend on a septic tank or other onsite treatment system to manage their wastewater.

The EPA estimates 10 to 20 percent of septic systems fail each year.

If septic tanks could impact your drinking water source, educate home owners on the potential impacts of effluent on the drinking water. Encourage them to have their tanks regularly inspected and maintained.

For more information and assistance with these and other pollution prevention and reduction strategies contact RCAC at www.rcac.org.

