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## COUNTY OF SONOMA

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Sonoma County to Develop Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance** *Community input sought during development stage*

**SANTA ROSA, Calif. - For Immediate Release** - At their October 4, 2016, meeting, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, also serving as the Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors, provided direction to staff to return by the end of the year with a county-wide safe medicine disposal extended producer responsibility ordinance (Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance). Since 2005, Sonoma County local government agencies have operated voluntary safe medicine take back programs. An Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law would place the responsibility on the producers and manufacturers for funding the safe disposal of their products. Similar ordinances have been adopted in other California counties including San Francisco, Marin, Alameda, and Santa Cruz.

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and Water Agency Chairman Efren Carrillo stated, "A Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance will ensure sustainable funding for proper medicine disposal in Sonoma County. Between 2012 and 2014, 77 children visited an emergency room for an unintentional drug overdose. Providing a sustainable safe disposal program is critical to removing unused drugs from our homes and out of harm's way. Unused medication that is improperly disposed of is not only a threat to our residents, but also to our natural resources such as our creeks and waterways."

It is estimated that sixty-six percent of all adults in the United States use prescriptions drugs, and even more keep a supply of over-the-counter medications at home. In 2015, individuals in California age 65 and older filled an annual average of 31 prescriptions, of which up thirty-three percent go unused. Many unused medications are not disposed of in a timely and safe manner and often end up posing a significant risk to other people or the environment.

Sonoma County government agencies, supported by ratepayer sewer fees, have spent over \$1 million since 2007 to operate safe medicine take back programs, collecting over 100,000 pounds of unused medications to date. There are 24 drop-off sites across Sonoma and Mendocino counties.

The Sonoma County Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance Collaborative, composed of members from the Russian River Watershed Association, Sonoma County Water Agency, County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, and the cities of Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and Sebastopol, will coordinate with the Department of Health Services on the development of the Safe Medicine Disposal Ordinance. To learn more about the current voluntary Safe Medicine Disposal Program, please visit [www.safemedicinedisposal.org](http://www.safemedicinedisposal.org).

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The County of Sonoma is comprised of 27 departments and agencies that provide a full range of services to the community. It encompasses over 1600 square miles and is home to almost 500,000 residents. Sonoma County government has a history of providing excellent and responsive public service while operating under sound fiscal principles.

Located less than one hour north of San Francisco, Sonoma County combines in one location the beautiful Pacific coastline, award-winning wineries, majestic redwoods, historic towns, fine dining, and a wide variety of entertainment and cultural activities.