

New campaign aimed at safe prescription disposal

March 18 -- Pharmaceutical manufacturers, pharmacists and the federal government are teaming for an effort to educate consumers not to flush old medications down the toilet.

The so-called "SMARxT Disposal" campaign highlights environmental threats posed from discarded medicines contaminating lakes and rivers.

"Trace amounts of chemical compounds often associated with medications have been increasingly detected in our waters -- the very waters that support our nation's fish and other wildlife," said Gary Frazer, assistant director of Fisheries and Habitat Conservation within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Instead of putting old medications into the sanitary sewer system, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the American Pharmacists Association are encouraging consumers to crush the medicines in a plastic bag, add coffee grounds, sawdust or kitty litter, seal the bag and put it in the trash.

The addition of foreign substances is to discourage children or others from removing the discarded medicines from the trash and taking them.

"Consumers and pharmacists should be aware that it is important to take that extra step to protect our families and our natural resources," said John A. Gans, executive vice president and CEO of APhA.