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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Clean Water Services: Ahead of the Curve on Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products in Water**

Clean Water Services is working to protect Tualatin Basin water resources from pharmaceuticals and other commonly used personal care products that could affect water quality, in keeping with its reputation as an innovative public water resources utility that operates some of the nation's best advanced wastewater treatment facilities and surface water management programs. Clean Water Services (the District) collaborated with U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 2002 on a recently released study that found only trace levels of commonly used drugs in Fanno Creek and also concluded the Durham Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility efficiently removed most of the 21 pharmaceuticals targeted in the study. Furthermore, the District worked to ensure passage of the 2007 Oregon Senate Bill 737 that aims to protect waterways from "bioaccumulative persistent toxic pollutants" by implementing strategies set by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and funded by Oregon's largest wastewater treatment facilities.

"Clean Water Services knows about water quality in the Tualatin River and its tributaries, and for decades has partnered on scientific research with USGS and others to understand the water we are mandated to protect," said Charles Logue, director of the District's Regulatory Affairs Department. Commenting on the results of the USGS report based on a 2002 study, he said, "It was interesting to learn that our treatment facility removes most of the caffeine, nicotine, painkillers and common prescription drugs that people use." He added that although the data is from 2002, the results are useful because the 21 pharmaceuticals in the study continue to be used frequently.

For Clean Water Services the ultimate goal is to understand the impacts of widely used drugs, personal care and cleaning products on local streams, fish and aquatic species. "We are not aware of any

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evidence that the presence of these materials in cleaned wastewater poses a risk to public health,” Logue said. “We’re asking questions like: What’s the ecological tradeoff for artificial fragrances that make our laundry smell fresh? Is it okay to dump the last of your coffee in the gutter? What about the pollutants in antibacterial soap?”

“We’ve come a long way from the days when a river had to catch fire for people to worry about what was in the water,” Logue said. Nowadays, people want to know whether any part of the water cycle is being polluted, from waterways, to drinking water, to the wastewater stream. “As technology has advanced and scientists can detect previously undetectable levels of contaminants in water, we need to understand the impacts and work to address those that are the most harmful to human health and the environment.”

On Wednesday, September 9, 2009, Clean Water Services will host a public forum with Stewart Rounds of the U. S. Geological Survey Oregon Water Science Center and Charles Logue to discuss the "Reconnaissance of pharmaceutical chemicals in urban streams of the Tualatin River Basin, Oregon, 2002" study. The forum will begin 6:30 p.m. at the Durham Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility conference room at 16580 SW 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Tigard. Those who wish to attend are asked to RSVP to Sheri Wantland at (503) 681-5111 or [wantlands@cleanwaterservices.org](mailto:wantlands@cleanwaterservices.org).

Clean Water Services actively supports research by the USGS, Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA), the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF) and other agencies and organizations seeking to better understand how trace concentrations of the above materials may be affecting water resources. Logue said, “People don’t fully understand that their prescription drugs and household cleaning products might be considered pollutants. Of course, the easiest way to reduce pollutants in water is to keep them out of the water cycle in the first place. It will take a lot of public education to change people’s expectations and behaviors, and Clean Water Services and our partners will help.”

Clean Water Services’ current public awareness campaign “Join the Cycle” encourages individuals to use less chemicals in yard care, pick up and properly dispose of pet waste and not to flush household wipes down the toilet. “These are excellent messages about how simple changes can help water quality, but we need to continue broadening our efforts to promote personal responsibility for protecting the environment,” Logue said.

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Clean Water Services is a water resource management utility for more than 500,000 people in urban Washington County and small portions of Multnomah County, Clackamas County, Lake Oswego and Portland. Clean Water Services operates four wastewater treatment facilities, constructs and maintains flood management and water quality projects, and manages flow in the Tualatin River to improve water quality and protect fish habitat and leads watershed-wide water supply planning in close cooperation with other entities throughout the region. Although Clean Water Services maintains a close working relationship with Washington County government, it is a separately managed and financed public utility. For more information, visit [www.cleanwaterservices.org](http://www.cleanwaterservices.org).

Results of the Tualatin River basin pharmaceuticals study are available in USGS Scientific Investigations Report 2009–5119, "Reconnaissance of pharmaceutical chemicals in urban streams of the Tualatin River Basin, Oregon, 2002" at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2009/5119/>

To view the "Join the Cycle" campaign go to <http://www.cleanwaterservices.org/Residents/ToolsAndTips/Doody.aspx>

Information on Senate Bill 737 and Oregon's list of persistent pollutants is at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/SB737/>

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