

# Carmel River NEWS

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From the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy (CRWC)

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Available for this fall! If interested contact [Lorin Letendre](#).

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## Carmel Launches Drug Disposal Program

Article by Abbie Beane

A safe drug disposal effort several years in the making has finally come to fruition. Peninsula residents can now anonymously drop their unwanted, unused medications at the Carmel Police Department. The Pebble Beach Community Services District plans to follow suit by October. Unwanted medication can also be dropped at several pharmacies and waste disposal sites on the Monterey Peninsula and in Salinas (see full list below), however, the police station drop boxes are often open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Other statewide jurisdictions have opened police station drops because these are the only locations that can legally accept controlled substances, although new DEA regulations are aiming to change that this year. Neither Carmel nor PBCSD will accept controlled substances at this time.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, unused medications left in the home pose a threat to children and invite drug abuse. They also may pollute our water supplies and affect human health via bio accumulation in the body. Negative impacts, such as altered social behaviors, have already been documented in fish. In 2014, approximately \$275.9 billion in prescription drugs will be prescribed in the U.S. and reports estimate that 10 to 33 percent of these go unused, according to the California Product Stewardship Council. A 2002 study by the U.S. Geological Survey found that 80 percent of streams in the U.S. had measurable concentrations of prescription drugs, including steroids and hormones.

In the PBCSD, the 38-gallon drop box will be open 8 am to 5 pm and accept unwanted medications, labelled or unlabeled. The drop box (one for pharms and one for sharps) will be located inside the Pebble Beach Fire Station behind two locking doors, and under 24 hour video surveillance. The Pharmaceutical Waste Container has a dual locking mechanism on the door and lock out capabilities on the loading door. Sharps Solutions will service the containers on demand. "We wanted to offer residents a convenient and environmentally friendly alternative to flushing or throwing away pills, expired medications and medicinal liquids," said Jennifer Valdez, PBCSD fire captain.

The Carmel-by-the-Sea program began on July 1 and accepts all prescription and over-the-counter medications 7 days a week, 24 hours a day in the police department lobby. Liquids and sharps are not accepted. The drop box is securely locked and emptied at least once per week. The contents are examined in order to remove any needles and liquids. The contents are then treated and destroyed as abandoned property. "This program not only helps to protect the environment, by protecting our water supply for future generations, it can also deter the



usage of prescription drugs by unintended parties - including young people facing peer pressure and new ways to 'get high,'" said Sergeant Luke Powell in a recent press release.

State Bill 1014, expected to be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee in August, would require the California State Board of Pharmacy, in consultation with the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery and the State Department of Public Health, to adopt regulations to implement California drug take-back programs for the collection and destruction of home-generated pharmaceutical waste. The Alameda County's Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance has also made waves in the pharmaceutical world. This ordinance was the first in the nation to hold pharmaceutical companies responsible for the safe collection and disposal of unused medications from the public.

In December of 2012, three pharmaceutical companies sued Alameda County, and in August of last year, US District Judge Richard Seeborg found the ordinance constitutional in the 9th circuit court. A notice of appeal was then filed by PhRMA and other plaintiff organizations in the Federal Court of Appeals, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals hearing took place in July. Alameda County expects to win the appeal as well and set a precedent for other counties and states.

Other pharmaceutical drop sites:

- Central Avenue Pharmacy, Pacific Grove
- Ordway Pharmacy, Monterey
- CSUMB Health Center
- Carmel Drug Store
- All Care Pharmacy, Salinas
- A&O Clinic Pharmacy, Salinas (for pharmacy customers only)
- Alisal Drug Store - Bob Souza's, Salinas (for pharmacy customers only)
- Monterey Regional Waste Management District
- Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority
- Monterey County Health Department



One of the new medication disposal drop boxes in the Monterey Peninsula.

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## Breaking News About Drug Take-Backs!

Excerpt from *The New York Times* (Sept 8, 2014) 'D.E.A. to Allow Return of Unused Pills to Pharmacies' by Catherine St. Louise

Steel boxes made by MedReturn are being used to get prescribed drugs off the streets. Concerned by rising rates of prescription drug abuse, the Drug Enforcement Administration announced Monday that it would permit consumers to return unused prescription medications like opioid painkillers to pharmacies.

The move is intended to help reduce stockpiles of unneeded medicines in homes, which are often pilfered by teenagers. Under the new regulation, patients and their relatives will also be allowed to mail unused prescription drugs to an authorized collector using packages to be made available at pharmacies and other locations, like libraries and senior centers.

The new regulation, which will go into effect in a month, covers drugs designated as controlled substances. Those include opioid painkillers like OxyContin, stimulants like Adderall and depressants like Ativan. Until now, these drugs could not legally be returned to pharmacies. The Controlled Substances Act allowed patients only to dispose of the drugs

themselves or to surrender them to law enforcement.



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