

Greetings Colleagues and Friends,

In class with students, we are often asked about pharmaceuticals in our water. The river industry lists these still as "chemicals of emerging concern". You can follow this link to see some of what the Environmental Protection Agency is currently doing with regard to these chemicals. <http://www.epa.gov/ppcp/faq.html#Whatarethemajorissues>

Then, because we are a global economy, you can read some of the latest material out of Europe (below). As I read this I reflected back to an Public Radio article I heard yesterday despairing that neither political party was going to address climate change in the upcoming election unless pushed. Aside from the obvious problems with that, the larger issue is that we see little, if any, conversation combined with real proactive movement on environment in our political arena at the elected official level these days.

So many other countries around the globe are tending to both these topics and other environmental subjects as well, while our politicians pass. Many of us have repeatedly worked to move the environment into more mainstream discussions with headlines like the one below, appearing instead in other parts of the world. I'm wondering at this point, what a conversation and outcomes could look like with businesses thinking restoratively about the natural resources, which provide them foundational support, and engaging health partners on a topic like this to address it sheerly from a health perspective (with positive fall-out to natural resources, people and profit). Climate could be (and is in some quarters) addressed from a similar "personal, community, national security and jobs" perspective.

I'm not discounting all the hard work we all do on rivers in North America - just hopefully giving you food for thought.

Best to you all,

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Europe to target pharmaceutical pollution with new water quality rules

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The European Commission has unveiled a new set of water pollution rules, which will for the first time include certain pharmaceutical products.

The Commission is proposing to add 15 chemicals to the list of 33 pollutants that are currently monitored and controlled in EU surface waters.

The popular pain-relieving drug Diclofenac is one of three pharmaceuticals to be put on the European water watch-list, which law-makers say is another step towards improving the quality of rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

The 15 substances include industrial chemicals as well as compounds used in biocides and plant protection products. They have been selected on the basis of scientific evidence that they may pose a significant risk to health.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: "Water pollution is one of the environmental worries most frequently cited by EU citizens. I welcome this advance as it is clearly answering people's expectations.

"These 15 additional chemicals need to be monitored and controlled to ensure they don't pose a risk to the environment or human health."

The update will be achieved through a revision of the Directive on priority substances in the field of water quality. The newly proposed substances are the outcome of a review that considered the risks posed by some 2000 substances according to their levels in surface waters, and their hazardousness, production and use.

For six of the 15 new priority substances the classification proposed would require their emissions to water to be phased out within 20 years. The proposal also includes stricter standards for four currently controlled substances, and a requirement to phase out the emissions of two others already on the list.

The proposed 15 additional priority substances are:

- * Plant protection product substances: Aclonifen, Bifenox, Cypermethrin, Dicofol, Heptachlor, Quinoxifen
- * Substances used in biocidal products: Cybutryne, Dichlorvos, Terbutryn
- * Industrial chemicals: Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCDD)
- * Combustion by-products: Dioxin and Dioxin-Like PCBs
- * Pharmaceutical substances: 17 alpha-ethinylestradiol (EE2), 17 beta-estradiol (E2), Diclofenac

Pharmaceuticals are proposed for the first time. The proposal does not put into question the medicinal value of these substances, but addresses the potential harmful effects of their presence in the aquatic environment.

Concentrations above the proposed standards can affect fish health, reducing successful reproduction, for example, and harming other living organisms. Our awareness of the impact of pharmaceuticals in the environment has grown considerably in recent years, and the proposal is based on the latest scientific knowledge.

The Commission also proposes improvements to the monitoring and reporting of chemical pollutants in water, as well as a mechanism to obtain better information on the concentrations of other pollutants that might need to be controlled in the future at EU level. The Commission proposal is accompanied by a report to the European Parliament and Council on the outcome of the review of the existing list of controlled substances.

Give good people good information and they'll do good things.

(If you've just received this single newsletter, it may be because I thought you'd be interested in this particular subject. You may or may not get others. If you want on my list regularly, e-mail me. If you want off my list, e-mail me. Thanks!)

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