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## **Utah waterways test positive for prescription drugs**

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By John Hollenhorst, KSL-TV

The results are in from the first round of testing to find out if prescription drugs are ending up in Utah waterways. The findings suggest we should all stop flushing pills down the toilet.

Testing in the Park City area mirrors national studies that show it's a real problem almost everywhere, with unknown consequences.



A plant near Jeremy Ranch treats 3 million gallons of sewage a day from the Park City area. Tests on effluent flowing out of the plant over the last year turned up a roster of chemicals that looks like a shopping list at Walgreen's. There's bug spray and ibuprofen, Prozac and birth control drugs; all in extremely low concentrations.

It's not some special Park City problem. "No, it doesn't mean up here people are depressed or have higher cholesterol or have additional issues they are taking pharmaceuticals for," said Michael Luers, with the Snyderville Basin Water Reclamation District.

Similar trace chemicals have been found downstream from sewage plants all over the world because standard sewage treatment doesn't remove the chemicals.

"People have to remember that when they take unused or expired pharmaceuticals and they flush them down the commode, it's just like coming out to the creek here and dumping them in the creek," Luers said.

As the chemicals get into the environment, the worry is they can disrupt hormonal processes, even feminizing male animals. "It's been shown in other places around the world that concentrations of some of these chemicals, at those levels, are having an impact on fish populations," Luers said.



Tests on fish in East Canyon Creek have been inconclusive so far, but studies in other parts of the country have found enough anomalies to make biologists nervous.

"We don't know. That's the bottom line. But what we do know is we'd like to prevent these issues from happening, and we don't like people flushing," said Leah Ann Lamb, with the Utah Division of Water Quality.

To get ahead of the curve, the Snyderville Basin Water Reclamation District has already made plans for a new treatment process with activated charcoal. It's quite expensive.

Meanwhile, if you want to know where you can safely dispose of expired drugs, you can find details by clicking the related link to the right of the story.

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