While many people have unused medications in their cabinets, they don't know what to do with them. There is not an ideal answer, but one thing is for sure, it is no longer recommended to flush them down the sink or toilet. Wastewater treatment plants were not designed to remove these medications, and many end up getting into the wastewater stream. Medications and their metabolites can be filtered out of the wastewater treatment process largely intact, and when they enter the streams, they can affect fish and other aquatic organisms that live there. A similar problem exists when some personal care products (PCPs), such as lotions and medicines, are disposed of by skin.

There are various sources of unregulated pharmaceuticals that can lead to water contamination (e.g. residential homes, hospitals, and agricultural operations). At a May 22, 2007 convention in California, the pharmaceutical industry presented that, according to their best estimate, about 3% of prescribed drugs are unused and disposed of via the trash or sewer. Of that, they estimate 66% is attributed to individual use. This means that the majority of pharmaceuticals that enter waterways are: excretion after use, disposal in the trash, and being flushed down the toilet. A United States Geological Survey (USGS) study found pharmaceuticals, hormones, and other organic wastewater contaminants in 80% of the 139 streams sampled in 30 states.

In environmental communities, the term restoration is often thrown around casually, as an activity that simply requires brief construction and a few Saturday volunteer plantings. Long-term stewardship needs are often overlooked amid the immediate rewards of freshly planted ground and photo shoots. However, the realities of enhancing our existing resources are fraught with subtle complications and obstacles. As Salt Lake County has worked with numerous municipal and federal partners to restore areas along the Jordan River, many lessons have been learned. Previous studies have raised questions and identified potential solutions. Although some of these solutions apply to initial construction, the overall management framework is a longer, time-consuming activity that demands involvement from individuals and additional project sites. These sites are commonly referred to as the “206 project sites” and are approximately 150 acres of wetlands along the Jordan River. Previous project sites were funded with funds acquired through the Central Utah Water Project and additional property was purchased through the Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation District. Despite the recent loss of federal support, Salt Lake County has continued to implement Jordan River ecosystem restoration, using its own funding over the past three years.

Both the EPA and 206 projects are focused on lowing the Jordan stream bank to allow for an expanded habitat to provide additional access to the water table, and an expanded floodplain. After physical alteration of the stream channel, the views expressed in this periodical are those of the authors, not necessarily those of Salt Lake County, the Salt Lake County Mayor, the Division of Flood Control and Engineering, or any other entity.
Can we really put a price tag on clean water and healthy streams? In some strange way we can. In terms of the U.S. economy, healthy streams are worth much more than one could imagine. High water quality not only affects the environment, it affects the price we pay, well being, private individuals and businesses. The economic benefits of these benefits is an overall positive economic impact that is distributed throughout the entire country.

Existing research shows these benefits exist for both use and non-use, including improved recreation, fishing and hiking along stream corridors. Non-use activities are based on aesthetic value (e.g. viewed). Surveys conducted in Colorado revealed that most of the individuals were willing to pay for additional ecosystem and environmental services on their water bills.

Furthermore, existing research in California concluded that increased “water quality can result in increased property values of at least three percent for bank stabilization and up to 11 percent for improving fishing habitat.” A different survey found houses located on a restored river had a three to 11 percent difference in property values. Similarly, properties close to a stream with green corridors in their natural condition in Salt Lake County, however, there are few answers to restoration dilemmas. Preservation and development are often in competition for stream corridor. For example, in Salt Lake County, we promote both economic and environmental values while maintaining and preserving stream corridors and “greenways.”

Many opportunities exist to improve the Jordan River ecosystem. However, true stewardship cannot be accomplished over night or in a season. Establishing an ordinance to protect sources of drinking water, namely through wetlands to develop these areas, opportunities to preserve and enhance the Jordan River are increasingly limited. When asked, most residents (52%) said they would like to see more stream and river corridors in their natural condition in Salt Lake County. Therefore, there are few answers to restoration dilemmas. Preservation and development are often in competition for stream corridor. For example, in Salt Lake County, we promote both economic and environmental values while maintaining and preserving stream corridors and “greenways.”

We are working on our Water Quality Stewardship Plan (WaQSP) which is two years in the making. The Water Quality Stewardship Plan (WaQSP) is a program that is intended to be a tool to assist in developing a stewardship framework for the Jordan River. The WaQSP is designed to be a guide for the development of a long-term stewardship plan that will address the issues identified in the draft of our Water Quality Stewardship Plan. This draft is available online at www.waterresources.slco.org. To receive a hard or CD copy of the Plan, let us know at nrees@slco.org. The entire WaQSP document is available on our website at www.slco.org/slcnews. The Water Quality Stewardship Plan (WaQSP) is intended to be a tool to assist in developing a stewardship framework for the Jordan River. The WaQSP is designed to be a guide for the development of a long-term stewardship plan that will address the issues identified in the draft of our Water Quality Stewardship Plan. This draft is available online at www.waterresources.slco.org. To receive a hard or CD copy of the Plan, let us know at nrees@slco.org.

On September 6, 2007, Mayor Peter Corcoran and fifteen of the county’s municipal mayors signed a resolution to promote the Million Trees for A Million People campaign.

The goal of this campaign is to plant one million trees by 2017, that’s one tree for every resident living in Salt Lake County. This unified effort will create and enhance an urban forest in the County that is not only fire resistant but a valuable carbon sink. We will be taking comments on the WaQSP through May 31, 2008.

If the development pressures continue, the region will lose the组 to grow and our County will lose the group of beneficial properties. From a habitat standpoint, this project would do to make sure that tree lives a long and healthy life. To learn more about the Million Trees for A Million People project visit http://www.milliontrees.slco.org/.