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Media Release

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Kitsap Public Health and University of Washington Team Up on “Emerging Contaminants” Study

Chemical Indicators Studied to More Effectively Clean Up Human Sources of Water Pollution

BREMERTON, WA—Kitsap Public Health and the University of Washington Center for Urban Waters in Tacoma have embarked on an innovative study to help solve some of the region’s most perplexing water pollution problems.

The study involves measuring so-called “emerging contaminants”, chemical indicators of human waste sources impacting our streams, lakes and marine waters. The goal is to develop a new investigative tool that can be used to differentiate human pollution sources from other sources including pet waste, livestock, and wildlife. Determining the origin of water pollution is a critical step in effectively correcting it.

To accomplish this work, field staff are collecting and analyzing water samples at 18 different locations around the County. Most of these areas have high levels of bacterial contamination. Sources of bacterial contamination from human waste include leaking sewer pipes or failing septic systems.

Emerging contaminants being analyzed include medicines, caffeine, personal care products, flame retardants, pesticides, human hormones, and other substances. The research, funded by the Russell Family Foundation, will advance current science by selecting contaminants that are most predictive of human pollution.

Although the health impacts from these compounds in the environment are not fully understood, our ability to detect and quantify them will help other water quality agencies around Puget Sound more effectively reduce water pollution.

For additional information, contact Shawn Ultican, Senior Environmental Health Specialist, at 360-731-5713.

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