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## Water pollution prevention study set for Golden

Personal care products and household cleaners targeted  
By Meredith Knight

September 17, 2009

Over the next year, Golden will become a testing ground of sorts, as the Institute of Environmental Sciences works to educate citizens about wastewater contaminants, then test the city's wastewater to see if the education was productive.

The study specifically targets consumer products such as shampoo, antibacterial soaps and lotions that contain chemicals that persist in the water system after they are washed away and have unknown health effects for aquatic life, according to Project Manager Sara Klingenstein.

Millions of dollars are spent on studying the toxic effects of these chemicals, but little is done to study protection, EIS director Carol Lyons said.

"To our knowledge nobody aside from ourselves is conducting a project to prevent contaminants of emerging concern from getting in the water," Lyons said

In the next few months IES hopes to have a list of recommendations people could implement to reduce their chemical footprint, or the amount of chemicals they put into the wastewater system, according to Lyons.

Musk ketone, for example, is a chemical fragrance often included in shampoos and other scented products.

"It's designed to be very persistent," Klingenstein explained, so the product's fragrance lasts. But that means the chemical does not break down in wastewater and is ingested by the tiny krill and other organisms that larger fish eat. The contamination can then be passed on to larger organisms.

Initial water samples have been taken from the city's wastewater system to establish baseline levels of the chemicals.

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EIS will conduct surveys to find out about people's buying and using behaviors. The project's goal is to reach 400 to 500 households.

Then, the six-month community-based social-marketing campaign will begin.

Klingenstein said the outreach would be interactive, rather than just providing information. She envisioned "Tupperware parties without any Tupperware" where neighborhood groups would gather to learn about contaminants, how to read labels to find them in products, and what alternative products are available.

After that, water samples and consumer surveys will be taken again to see what impact the study had.

If the study proves successful, EIS will make the program available to other cities and include other emerging contaminants.

"The purpose of IES' project is to do the investigation necessary so policy makers and decision makers can make the right decision," Lyons said.

#### **Contaminants of Emerging Concern**

The Institute for Environmental Solutions will be checking levels of more than a dozen emerging contaminants before and after its educational campaign in Golden. Those chemicals include atrazine, an herbicide, triclosan, an antimicrobial agent found in antibacterial soap, bisphenol A, found in plastic water bottles, and methylparaben, an antifungal agent used to preserve foods.

For more information on the study, or to volunteer to host a block party or distribute surveys, contact the institute at [www.i4es.org](http://www.i4es.org) or by e-mail at [CEC@i4es.org](mailto:CEC@i4es.org).

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