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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Alternatives to Hazardous Household Products**

Summer has arrived in the Lakes Region, a time for spending time at the beach, on the water, and enjoying the natural resources that our area has to offer. Of course, as residents of this region we all have a responsibility to protect our natural surroundings. One way to do this is by properly disposing of household hazardous waste (HHW). Household hazardous products include oil-based paints, multi-purpose cleaners, hair spray, and weed killers. They are considered hazardous because they are flammable, corrosive, or toxic.

These products need to be stored and disposed of responsibly due to their environmentally-damaging properties. Chemicals disposed of improperly can leach into our groundwater, polluting the wells that supply drinking water to homes throughout the Lakes Region. Most treatment plants and leach fields are incapable of processing these chemicals. Thus, simply pouring them down the drain, onto the ground, or disposing of them with household trash can cause contamination not only to our own health but the health and safety of the environment. Fortunately, today some of these harmful products have more environmentally-friendly alternatives.

At-home recipes for cleaning products use basic ingredients and can be very effective. Metal, wood, window, and multi-purpose cleaners as well as floor and furniture polishes can all be made from basic household products such as baking soda, lemon, vinegar, and vegetable oil. For example, a carpet cleaner can be made with this recipe: Mix ½ cup of dish detergent with a pint of warm water with an electric mixer until a stiff foam forms. Apply with a damp sponge. Rinse with a solution of 1 cup white vinegar and 1 gallon of lukewarm water. Other cleaning product recipes can be found at:

<http://www.lakesrpc.org/hhw/flipbook.pdf>.

Of course, not everyone has time to make their own cleaning products. In recent years, many environmentally-friendly cleaning products have been developed for the consumer from companies such as Seventh Generation, Clorox Green Works, and Ecover among other brands. While there is some variability regarding the definition of “green”,

these products generally claim to be biodegradable, organic, phosphate and chlorine free, and/or use recyclable packaging.

Despite these new products, unwanted household hazardous products are probably still on the shelves in your basement or garage. If you do have unwanted household hazardous products that you cannot give to a neighbor or use up yourself, then they need to be disposed of properly. The Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) assists 24 participating Lakes Region communities to pool state, regional, and local funds to provide safe, efficient, and effective HHW collections.

This year's collections will take place on the following two dates: Saturday, July 30, 2011 and Saturday, August 6, 2011 at a total of eight sites throughout the region. Homeowners and residents of the participating communities may go to whatever site is most convenient to them. To see whether your community is participating and get more information on these collections visit the Lakes Region HHW webpage at [http://www.lakesrpc.org/services\\_hhw.asp](http://www.lakesrpc.org/services_hhw.asp) or call the LRPC office at 279-8171.