SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN WATERSHEDS TRUST, INC.

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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SWEET WATER RECOMMENDS PUTTING SIDEWALKS ON "LOW-SALT DIET" TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT

Milwaukee, Wis. (Dec. 15, 2010) – With winter snow and ice here, homeowners should consider environmentally friendly and effective alternatives to simply covering their sidewalks and driveways with lots of rock salt, a local environmental organization says.

The group, Sweet Water, is offering homeowners tips to choosing the most environmentally suitable products and salting practices to combat sidewalk ice.

By learning about different types of salt and application methods, homeowners can ensure sidewalk safety while also help protect Southeastern Wisconsin rivers, lakes and fish, which can be harmed by high salt levels.

Jeff Martinka, executive director of Sweet Water, advised, "Water pollution from salt harms the quality of our waterways and threatens fish. Thinking before salting can help improve our waterways and help protect our fish."

"By following common-sense approaches of a 'low-salt diet,' homeowners can help protect the environment while keeping walkways safe," Martinka said.

Martinka's "low-salt diet" includes several ingredients:

1. *Shovel early, shovel often*. Remove as much snow during the storm as possible. Deicers work best when there is only a thin layer of snow or ice that must be melted.
2. *Check the label*. The table below shows how the main ingredients of common de-icing products compare. Check the package closely to see what you're buying—often a product may contain several of the ingredients listed below, but the first one listed is usually the main ingredient. Choose calcium chloride over sodium chloride when you can.
3. *Apply salt early, but sparingly*. No matter which chloride product you choose, a little goes a long way. Additional salt won't speed up the melting process. The recommended application rate for sodium chloride is about a handful per square yard. Calcium chloride works at much colder temperatures and you need a lot less (about a handful per three square yards).
4. *Stick to sand.* Kitty litter and ashes may provide some traction, but sand is cheaper and easier to clean up.
5. *Avoid products that contain urea.* Urea is a form of nitrogen, a fertilizer, when it washes off your driveway it will eventually end up in your local waters.

On the label:	Works Down to:	Cost	Environmental Concerns
Calcium Chloride	-25 degrees F	three times more than rock salt	Use three times less than rock salt No Cyanide Chloride impact
Magnesium Chloride	5 degrees F	n/a	Less toxic and safer for environment than calcium chloride
NaCl: Sodium Chloride or "rock salt"	15 degrees F	about $5 for a 50 pound bag	Contains cyanide Chloride impacts
Urea	20 to 25 degrees F	Five times more than rock salt	Needless nutrients Less Corrosion
Calcium Magnesium Acetate (CMA)	22 to 25 degrees F	20 times more than rock salt	Less toxic
Sand	No melting effect	about $3 for a 50 lb bag	Accumulates in streets and streams; needs to be swept up

Table courtesy Tom Schueler, Center for Watershed Protection

More information on Sweet Water's "Low-Salt Diet" can be found at:
http://www.swwtwater.org/home/documents/LowSaltFlyer.pdf

Sweet Water, the Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust, is a nonprofit organization created in 2008 as a partnership of local governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, academia, and individuals working collectively to improve the water resources in the 1,100 square miles of Greater Milwaukee Watersheds.

For more information on Sweet Water, visit www.swwtwater.org or contact Jeff Martinka, Executive Director, at 414-382-1766 or via martinka@swwtwater.org.

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