

Report proposes strategies for reducing pollutants in drinking water systems

June 7 2011, By Tina Dechausay

Researchers have known for more than 40 years that pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) such as hormones, prescription drugs and insecticides, can end up in drinking water systems. A report prepared by the Texas Tech University's Center for Water & Law Policy leaves aside the question of what, if anything, should be done, and asks instead, what can be done?

The report, “Alternative Strategies for Managing Pharmaceutical and [Personal Care Products](#) in [Water](#) Resources,” is the third phase of a long-term project funded by a \$450,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The report acknowledges the difficulty of addressing PPCPs through the legal system and legislation/ government action. Authors Gabriel Eckstein and George William Sherk propose that a more effective way of responding to PPCPs in [drinking water](#) supplies may be to focus on alternative strategies that stress removing PPCPs from the source. For example, pharmaceutical and [personal care](#) product manufacturers could create take-back programs, potentially reducing the amount of PPCPs that are thrown away.

In addition to the alternative strategies, the report also includes a summary of current research, a review of short- and long-term impacts on human and environmental health, and current legal and governmental mechanisms by which water supplies are protected. Furthermore, the research discusses a case study – phase two of the EPA funded project –

in which studies were conducted in West Texas on the presence of PPCPs in treated water returned to the environment.

A website, www.micropollutants.org, was created in phase one of this project, and houses the complete report (available for download in PDF format). The website is also a clearinghouse for data and reports about PPCPs in drinking [water systems](#) across the country.

Eckstein, a professor of law at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law, is a senior fellow with the Texas Tech Center for Water Law & Policy. Prior to joining the law faculty of Texas Wesleyan, Eckstein held the George W. McCleskey Chair in Water Law at the Texas Tech School of Law where he also served as the first director of the Center for Water Law & Policy. An internationally recognized expert in water law, Eckstein has worked directly with the United Nations and other world bodies on water-related issues and laws.

Sherk is chief operating officer of the International Performance Assessment Centre for Geologic Storage of Carbon Dioxide (IPAC-CO₂) in Regina, Saskatchewan. Prior to joining IPAC-CO₂, Sherk was Managing Director of the Colorado Energy Research Institute at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colo. and an adjunct professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. He is also of counsel to the law firm of Sullivan & Worcester in Washington, D.C., and an honorary associate at the UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee in Scotland.

The Center for Water Law & Policy at Texas Tech University was created in 2005 in response to the growing need for research into and information about global water issues. It was designed to create and nurture opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration on legal and policy issues related to the use, allocation, management, regulation, and conservation of fresh water resources at all levels of civil society – from

the purely local to the decisively global. The center is part of the Texas Tech interdisciplinary water initiative, which involves faculty and students representing the disciplines of law, public policy, economics, agriculture, geosciences, engineering, biological sciences and health sciences.

Provided by Texas Tech University

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