

Feds fail to develop drugs-in-water research plan

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

WASHINGTON — Documents obtained by The Associated Press (AP) reveal that a White House task force was aware of public concern about pharmaceuticals in drinking water supplies, and that it failed to meet its December deadline to produce a federal plan to research the issue of pharmaceuticals in drinking water, according to an April 14 [AP](#) story.

The AP, which reported in March that at least 41 million Americans receive [drinking water containing an array of pharmaceuticals](#), said it obtained task force-related documents under the Freedom of Information Act.

The documents reveal that the task force, which includes representatives from nine federal agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency, Agriculture Department and the Food and Drug Administration, failed to develop mandated reports and recommendations for coordination among federal agencies on a national plan to research pharmaceuticals in public drinking water supplies, AP said.

According to the AP, the working group on pharmaceuticals in the environment was formed two years ago through the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. It has met several times, and in March 2006, then-task force coordinator Kevin Geiss wrote: "There has been considerable congressional interest in this topic."

While the AP has reviewed more than 70 pages of the task force's documents, such as e-mails and weekly reports, it was not able to obtain the task force's agendas and minutes because the White House classified them as internal documents, meaning they cannot be released. The group's annual report is in draft form, which makes it also unable to be released, the AP reported.