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# People May Die of Thirst as Fossil Fuel Production Exhausts and Pollutes Our Fresh Water Supply

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You cannot live without water, but the fossil fuel industry is counting on squeezing the last drop out of the Earth to extract oil and natural gas.

On March 21, Bloomberg news ran an article, "[Global Energy Thirst Threatens Water Supplies, UN Says.](#)" It's rather grim to foresee that when the fresh water runs out or becomes too polluted to drink -- and desalination plants can only provide a small portion of drinking water -- the only option that the fuel industry may leave us with is imbibing toxic oil sludge.



(Photo: [ERIO](#))

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According to *Bloomberg News* coverage of the latest [United Nations World Water Development Report](#) on which its article is based:

Shale gas and oil production as well as biofuels “can pose significant risks” to water resources, pitting energy producers against farmers, factories and providers of drinking and sanitation services, the agency said....

Water-related needs for energy production have tripled since 1995, according to GE Water, while more than half of the global cotton production is grown in areas with high water risks. Electricity demand is forecast to rise at least two-thirds by 2035, driven by population growth.

"Significant risks" is perhaps an understatement as to the threat posed by such oil and other fossil fuel extraction processes that threaten a global supply that is already inadequate and is highly likely to decrease due to global warming.

A February Guardian UK commentary noted in [an article](#) entitled, "Fracking is depleting water supplies in America's driest areas, report shows. From Texas to California, drilling for oil and gas is using billions of gallons of water in the country's most drought-prone areas":

America's [oil](#) and [gas](#) rush is depleting [water](#) supplies in the driest and most [drought](#)-prone areas of the country, from [Texas](#) to [California](#), new research has found.

Of the nearly 40,000 oil and gas wells drilled since 2011, three-quarters were located in areas where water is scarce, and 55% were in areas experiencing drought, [the report by the Ceres investor network found](#).

Fracking those wells used 97 [billion] gallons of water, raising new concerns about unforeseen costs of America's [energy](#) rush.

The spiral of self-destruction for the species is not only the fresh water that is lost and polluted by fracking, the water used by fracking and other fossil fuel production methods is competing with water needed by farms. As the water necessary for agricultural production decreases, there will be less food and higher prices for what can be cultivated.

Looking at another fossil fuel extraction process that is a net destroyer of the Earth and the basic water and sustenance we need to survive, [Friends of the Earth evaluates](#) the impact of tar sands processing:

Extracting the fossil fuels in tar sands from the sand, silt, and clay requires enormous amounts of water. It takes about three barrels of water to extract one barrel of oil. More than 90 percent of this water, 400 million gallons per day, ends up as toxic waste dumped in massive pools that contain carcinogenic substances like cyanide.

Of course, the fossil fuel industry regularly pollutes rivers, streams and lakes in the US through coal mining residue, refineries, pipeline spills and so many other negligent factors. That is also the case with the tar sands production, leading to more water lost to pollution.

The bottom line is chilling: the fossil fuel energy complex is so wealthy and has so much power, it is the tyranosaurs rex of industrial development ravaging the Earth. Without full awareness of the general pollution of the world: big oil and its colleagues (along with the US, Canadian, and UK governments, among others) have decided to push energy development to absurd proportions that will limit the life of the human species on the planet in order to make billions of dollars more in profit.

The depletion of fresh water due to its exponentially growing roll in the fossil fuel extraction is just one part of the problem of extinction that faces us. The other, of course, is that these methods themselves are only worsening the carbon crisis that is primarily causing global warming -- and that in turn will dry

up even more fresh water.

Recently, Truthout featured "[Windfall](#)" as its Progressive Pick of the Week. An excerpt from the book was headlined, "Profiteers Are Lining Up To Make Money Off Global Warming." The key point of the book is that for every destructive impact of the industries causing climate change and a tempestuous disruption of the Earth's eco-balance, there are corporations and investors scheming to make money off of the devastation.

One key area is the growing privatization of water supplies, so that when fresh water becomes extremely scarce, the companies and financiers who have invested in owning lakes and tributary systems will demand a premium price for the right to survive in an environment where the temperatures are soaring.

You'll theoretically have a choice between five dollars for a glass of water and a glass of toxic sludge.

In such a scenario, only the wealthy will survive.


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