

The assault on America's drinking water and pristine rivers, as perpetrated by poor industry regulations and single-minded energy companies, is gaining attention in the media and traction in public discourse, thanks to some of the country's most daring and outspoken individuals and civil society organizations. Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is one of the industry's leading and most destructive methods for extracting natural gas from patches of shale throughout the U.S. many other parts of the globe.

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Comment [PD1]: Not clear what this is in reference to. "Single-minded" in terms of what? Perhaps "profit-seeking" is more precise?

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The human and environmental casualties incurred from fracking include toxic and highly flammable drinking water, bubbling rivers best reserved for the scenes of science fiction stories, and massive consumptions of water. Even at an untrained glance, these casualties appear as the obvious consequences of a process that injects into the earth millions of gallons of water, mixed with diesel fuel, benzene, hydrochloric acid, ethylene glycol and many more nefarious substances, with enough pressure to fracture shale formations, only to release natural gas in nearby water tables. Much of the damage is also caused by outmoded and ineffective regulatory regimes.

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So far, most of our research and activism has focused primarily on the United States, as if theses industrial malpractices somehow stopped at national boundaries. Well, they do not. Fracking is not only offending America's water wells, rivers and wildlife. It's poised to make a potentially catastrophic assault on life-sustaining waters on every continent across the globe. While the estimates on the global volume of shale reserves are "highly tentative," national security and energy exploration initiatives are popping up places like China, India and Germany to name a few.¹ The Brisbane Herald reports that the Canadian-based TAG Oil Ltd. will frack if it decides to exercise its permits for oil and gas exploration on New Zealand's East Coast. In Australia, Beach Energy is already operating vertical gas wells and is now looking to run fracture simulations and possibly begin drilling as early as 2011.²

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