

Fracking Exacerbates U.S. Drought Crisis

In California, Texas, and other parts of the West, drought is a national and world-scale water and food emergency. Nevertheless, hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is consuming huge volumes of water for oil and gas extraction.

A 2014 report by the Boston-based Ceres, found that 47% of all new fracking wells opened in the U.S. and Canada over the 29-month period January 2011 to May 2013 were in areas of high water stress. The map shows four such areas for the U.S.

Drought-stricken Texas, during this time period, had 9,000 new wells opened in places of extreme water shortage, and another 9,000 in dry-prone locations.

Only about 5% of all water used for fracking in these regions has been recy-

clad; that is, 95% is “consumed,” and gone. This has directly led, in such places as West Texas and eastern New Mexico, to ranches shutting down, and towns running out of water.

The volume of water consumed in these wells overall, in the United States and Canada, over a 2.5 year period, amounted to 367 million cubic meters (97 billion gallons). That is equivalent to the municipal water use of a city of 1 million people for a year.

—Marcia Merry Baker

