

# PLANETARY PERILS OF FRACKING BOOM

A first-of-its-kind report released Wednesday by Food & Water Watch details the more than 700 new U.S. facilities that have been recently built or proposed for development "to capitalize off of a glut of cheap fracked gas," and the consequences for the planet and its inhabitants if these projects are allowed to continue.

The report comes a week after top Energy Department officials, in a press release about natural gas exports, referred to fossil fuels as "molecules of U.S. freedom" and "freedom gas." Climate campaigners characterized that widely ridiculed language as just another example of the Trump administration's demonstrated commitment to planetary destruction.

**"Continuing to invest in fracked gas would represent a failure to address plastics pollution, a failure to prioritize human health and safety, and a failure to protect future generations from climate chaos."**

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, has raised concerns about public health in nearby communities—numerous studies have tied fracking to frequent hospitalizations for genital, skin, and urinary conditions as well as increased rates of asthma, cancer, and motor vehicle fatalities. But the concerns don't end there.

"These projects aren't just associated with health and safety risks: if even a fraction of them come to fruition, they will condemn the planet to a future of climate chaos," "Natural gas, touted as a 'bridge fuel' to a clean energy future, was actually helping to tip the scales of climate stability past the point of no return. Fracked gas was found to be a climate killer." Food & Water Watch executive director Wenonah Hauter warns in the forward of the report.

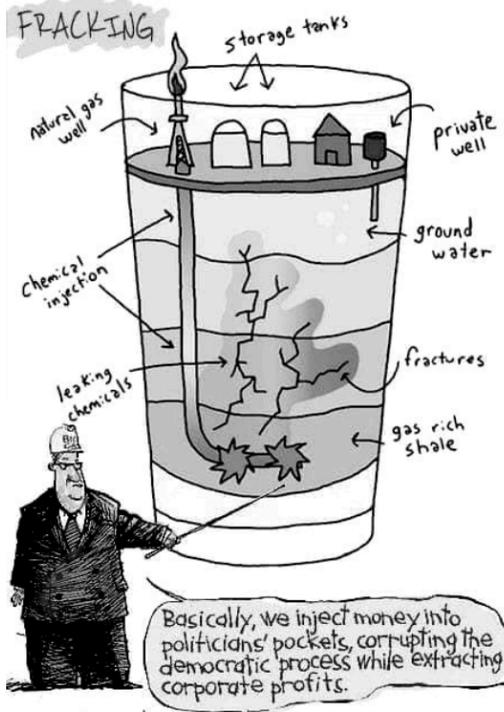
The report—titled Fracking Endgame: Locked Into Plastics, Pollution, and Climate Chaos focuses on three key industries that are both benefiting from and helping to drive the country's fracking boom: "the petrochemical and plastics industries that use natural gas liquids as a key feedstock for their manufacturing; gas exporters building liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals to ship gas overseas; and natural gas-fired power plants."

Fracking Endgame breaks down how each of these industries forms a symbiotically profitable business alliance with the fracking industry, and how they are rapidly expanding, with hundreds of projects recently completed or in the pipeline:

**Proliferation of plastics plants to capitalize on fracking:** Industry experts project that the plastics industry will have added 28 million tons of plastic production between 2011 and 2020, and more than \$202 billion is slated to be invested in 333 new facilities and expansions to take advantage of fracked gas, including 20 ethylene crackers to turn shale gas into feedstock for plastics manufacturing plants

**Pushing natural gas exports to raise domestic prices:** The industry and the Trump administration are promoting LNG exports to reduce the domestic gas supply and raise U.S. natural gas prices. In 2018, there were only three active LNG export facilities in the contiguous United States, but 22 more were either already being built or were approved for construction, and another 22 were pending federal review.

**Wave of new fracked gas-fired power plants:** The power industry has 364 new gas-fired power plants under development for 2018 to 2022, and gas deliveries to power plants rose 57 percent between 2006 (before the fracking boom) and 2017. The gas-fired generation



capacity from plants added in 2017 and 2018 alone could power 24 million U.S. households, an expansion that is creating a power surplus in some areas.

U.S. exporters of fracked gas, the report points out, rely in part on political allies—both in Congress and the Trump administration.

Food & Water Watch was among the more than 200 groups that sounded the alarm last month over federal legislation—which has passed the House but still lacks Senate approval—that would provide billions of dollars in support for natural gas infrastructure projects and, critics warn, lock "both the United States and Europe into decades of continued fossil fuel dependence under the guise of national security."

The report outlines how "the Trump administration has been pushing exports by trying to rush the approvals of new LNG export facilities," from Energy Secretary Rick Perry—who once claimed "my job is to sell a lot of [LNG] around the world" and labeled opposition to fossil fuels "immoral"—to Gary Cohn, the president's then-top economic adviser, who in 2017 demanded a new review of the proposed Jordan Cove LNG export terminal, even though the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had rejected the Oregon project the previous year.

**"What we see in this report is the industry blueprint for ensuring decades more of fossil fuel dominance over our society. If it becomes realized, the endgame would be a scary, dangerous world of omnipresent plastic waste, expanding air and water pollution, unacceptable health impacts and irreversible climate chaos," Hauter said in a statement. "The solution is simple: We must cut off this filthy production stream at its source, by banning fracking and halting the runaway buildout of fracked gas infrastructure that is spreading like a toxic web all over the country."**

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## Rainbow Ridge Under Assault

Humboldt Redwood Company's manner of logging also shines a light on programs of corporations like **Home Depot** that charge a premium price for lumber certified as **sustainably sourced**," said long-time Mattole activist Jane Lapiner. "This is cheating the consumer. Humboldt Redwood Company. is wholly owned by the Fisher family, San Francisco real estate moguls that also own the GAP and Old Navy. Though the Fishers claim to have serious environmental principles they have apparently have given the go-ahead on this logging."

Tree-sitters and forest defenders have pledged to stop the logging until Humboldt Redwood Company comes to its senses and negotiates the protection of these natural treasures. Before the Wednesday arrest of the Mattole Elders, **earlier actions** at Monument Gate had disrupted attempts to resume logging. With all that was happening on the ground, Lear Security Guards were camping under an old-growth tree threatened with imminent destruction in a contested stand of old growth fir. **Up in the tree**, sitting on a net of cord woven between two level branches was Rook, attempting to **stay aloft** in the centuries old tree until it is saved. On Saturday, Rook ascended the tree, avoiding security patrols and drone flyovers, remaining undetected until they hailed security guards who were searching for them later the next day.

Protests are continuing. Earth First! Humboldt is organizing a **training camp for forest defenders** to prepare to resist the logging. It will be held in mid June in a location near Rainbow Ridge. Meanwhile, the **tree-sitter** Rook stated, "I'm up here because we need intact forests more than we need forest products. HRC wants to say their logging is sustainable but they didn't plant the trees they're cutting. This tree is 200 years old and they'll invent some technicality so they can fell it to build a road and still say "we don't log old growth'." Rook is referring to Humboldt Redwood Company's policy which, according to their website, allows for the cutting of old growth trees if it "**is required for road construction.**" The new logging road would provide access to log approximately 100 acres.

When asked why they decided to take this drastic action, Rook stated, "**The reality is that we're in a climate and ecological crisis. Mattole watershed residents are using every legal means to preserve the remaining ancient forest here, but HRC is just rushing ahead anyway to convert it all into Douglas fir plantation. They're acting in bad faith and this is one way to slow them down.**"

Community efforts to protect this unlogged coastal Douglas fir, oak and madrone forest from industrial logging will go on as it has for over 30 years.

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