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The Fine Print

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Fracking Projected to Continue for Decades in Texas

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The significant size of natural gas reserves in Texas could mean at least another two decades of hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) in the state, according to a recent study[1]. This means that communities will have to deal with air and drinking water contamination from the toxic chemicals used in fracking for some time to come unless greater protections are put in place by the state or federal government.

According to a study[2] by the University of Texas at Austin's **Bureau of Economic Geology**, drillers have recovered less than a quarter of the natural gas in Texas' Barnett Shale, located in the northeast part of the state. An estimated 44 trillion cubic feet of natural gas could be extracted through 2030, though in steadily decreasing quantities. Barnett production peaked in 2012 at two trillion cubic feet of gas per year. Compare this to the nation's consumption of natural gas, which is more than 24 trillion cubic feet of gas annually.

The study relies on production data from 16,000-plus wells in the region. Researchers examined every well that had been drilled up until this point, plus the areas that still had not been drilled. The university's **Bureau of Economic Geology** plans to complete similar studies of three other major U.S. shale gas basins by the end of this year, including the Marcellus Shale, which stretches from New York through Pennsylvania to West Virginia and parts of Ohio.

Current state oversight laws are inadequate to protect the public from the health and environmental risks of fracking. State and federal policymakers must fulfill their responsibility to protect the health and welfare of communities and develop strong rules before fracking continues and more Americans are put at risk.

Image by flickr user World Resources[3], used under a Creative Commons license.

[1]: <http://www.utexas.edu/news/2013/02/28/new-rigorous-assessment-of-shale-gas-reserves-forecasts-reliable-supply-from-barnett-shale-through-2030/> [2]: <http://www.utexas.edu/news/2013/02/28/new-rigorous-assessment-of-shale-gas-reserves-forecasts-reliable-supply-from-barnett-shale-through-2030/> [3]: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/worldresourcesinstitute/>

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