

Watts Up With That?

Getting Rid of the Water

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Directional drilling and deep underground hydraulic fracturing produces large amounts of saline water that is largely unusable. In “Water, Water Everywhere: Maximizing Oil Field Produced Water Use in West Texas” Scott W. Tinker suggests a possible approach to address this issue. In part, he writes:

“Associated with oil and gas, each day the Permian basin produces over 20 million barrels of salty water! North Dakota, Oklahoma, Appalachia and other regions also produce significant water along with oil or natural gas. In Texas, industry reuses what it can, then transports and disposes the remainder into deep or shallow rock formations, which changes subsurface pressure conditions and can induce earthquakes.

A decade ago, as the State Geologist of Texas, I worked with the Texas Legislature, industry, and academics to create TexNet at the Bureau of Economic Geology (BEG). BEG maintains over 200 seismometers tracking earthquakes across Texas and makes the data publicly available.

The Railroad Commission of Texas, which regulates oil and gas activity, uses TexNet to help mitigate earthquakes, while still allowing for production of oil and gas.”