



July 15, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Improved drilling techniques have unlocked vast new reserves of shale gas, a resource that could be large enough to displace significant amounts of coal in the power sector. But growing shale gas development has raised both environmental questions and public controversy. A new independent assessment by the Worldwatch Institute concludes that improved adherence to drilling best practice and better regulatory oversight are essential if shale gas is to contribute to a low carbon future while protecting the health of local communities and ecosystems.

The report, [\*Addressing Environmental Risks from Shale Gas Development\*](#), details what happens beneath the surface during horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing in deep shale formations, evaluating the risks to local water quality and the environment, as well as the technologies and policies needed to mitigate them.

Authored by Mark Zoback of Stanford University, Saya Kitasei of the Worldwatch Institute, and Bradford Copithorne of the Environmental Defense Fund, the report is the second in a series of briefing papers from Worldwatch's Natural Gas and Sustainable Energy Initiative, which examines critical environmental and policy issues surrounding natural gas.

The report concludes that in deep shales, faulty well construction and above-ground leaks and spills of fracturing fluids and waste water, rather than artificial fractures created during hydraulic fracturing, present the most significant risks to the environment. Continued study and improved communication of the environmental risks associated with both individual wells and large scale shale gas development are essential for society to make well-informed energy choices.

A complimentary PDF of [\*Addressing Environmental Risks from Shale Gas Development\*](#) is available online.

I hope this report will prove useful in your work and welcome your feedback.

Best Regards,

Christopher Flavin  
President, Worldwatch Institute