

New sources of fossil fuel 'risk climate catastrophe'

OIL giants including Shell and BP plan to extract fossil fuels from new sources that could trigger catastrophic climate change, a report warns today.

Pumping out tar sands and oil shale from reserves in the US and Canada is becoming increasingly attractive as oil prices soar, researchers say.

But refining the material is eight times more polluting than processing conventional oil, according to a report by WWF and Co-operative Financial Services.

Nonetheless, Shell and BP are planning to invest £62billion in 'unconventional' fuels by 2015, warns the study.

'Unconventional fuel sources may seem attractive in the short term but ultimately the environmental and economic costs are unthinkable,' said James Leaton of WWF-UK.

If the estimated 1.1trillion barrels of recoverable fuel in Canada and the US were extracted, it would release 980bil-

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lion tonnes of carbon dioxide, it is claimed. This could push atmospheric CO₂ levels well past the point believed to trigger dangerous climate change and mass extinction of species.

Mining tar sands – a mix of oil, water, sand and clay – will also damage substantial areas of Canadian forest which act as carbon sinks.

WWF and the Co-op are calling for a global halt to licensing the fuels and legislation to stop them being sold here.

But a BP spokesman said: 'Oil sands represent a significant untapped resource from a politically stable country.'

And a spokeswoman for Shell said: 'Supplies of "easy oil" cannot keep up with the demand growth.'

'Society has little choice but to add other sources of energy, including "unconventional" fossil fuels like oil sands.'