BOULDER, Colo. (June 20, 2012) – Western Resource Advocates (WRA) today released a new report on the amount of water needed for hydraulic fracturing in Colorado, providing the most comprehensive numbers available on the subject. In Fracking Our Future: Measuring Water and Community Impacts from Hydraulic Fracturing, researchers examined available data on water and fracking using Colorado as an example, and found that fracking requires enough water to otherwise serve the residential needs of the entire population of some of the state’s largest cities.

“It’s clear that we need to take a step back and make sure we aren’t over-allocating our most important natural resource one frack job at a time,” said Laura Belanger, Water Resources & Environmental Engineer with Western Resource Advocates and the lead author of the report. “While we need natural gas to transition to a cleaner energy future, we must have water to survive.”

Based on figures compiled from government and private industry sources, Fracking Our Future calculates that the amount of water used annually for hydraulic fracturing in Colorado (22,100 to 39,500 acre feet) is enough to meet the yearly residential needs of up to 296,100 people—more than the population of cities such as Cincinnati, Ohio; Buffalo, New York; or Orlando, Florida.

“It is a travesty that in a water-starved state like Colorado, we are using so much water for oil and gas drilling,” said Longmont resident Barbara Fernandez, who retired in 2011 after 24 years with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission and has grown increasingly concerned about fracking near residential areas.

The report notes that it is particularly important to properly manage the amount of water used for hydraulic fracturing because fracked water is 100% consumptive. Whereas 90-95% of indoor residential water returns (from uses such as showers and washing machines) eventually makes its way back into streams, frack water contains potentially harmful chemicals that must be disposed of in underground wells or pits.

The complete report, as well as a fact sheet, is available for download at:
www.WesternResources.org/frackwater
Western Resource Advocates is a regional nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the West's land, air, and water. Offices or staff are located in Boulder (CO), Phoenix and Tucson (AZ), Pocatello (ID), Santa Fe (NM), Carson City (NV) and Salt Lake City (UT). Visit www.WesternResourceAdvocates.org.