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With the number of conventional oil reserves shrinking, governments around the world are looking for unconventional ways to produce and extract oil other than the use of oil wells. While it is evident that the oil wells are on their way to depletion, producing oil in unconventional manners is often less efficient and has a higher environmental impact than the conventional methods.

Unconventional Oil Sources

There are several sources of unconventional oil that can be found. These include:

Oil Shale: a sedimentary rock that is made of fine grains and is organically rich. It contains kerogen that can produce shale oil from the liquid hydrocarbons. This can be used in place of conventional crude oil, but producing shale oil is much more expensive and also has a higher environmental impact.

Synthetic Crudes and Oil Sands: found in many countries around the world, Canada and Venezuela have the largest deposits. The Bituminous sands look similar to tar and have to be heated in order to flow. These deposits are only being referred to as oil reserves. The high price of oil has led to new technology to develop to extract the unconventional oil from the sand.

Coal Based Supplies in Liquid form: this process involves creating synthetic fuels in the form of liquid from coal.

Biomass Liquid: process of producing liquid biofuels using biomass.

Chemical processing Natural Gas: this involves turning natural gas into such things as petroleum and fuel using a chemical process.

Environmental Concerns

When it comes to mining any type of product, there is a large amount of waste produced. This waste can be cause for environmental concerns. There are several concerns associated with the production of unconventional oil products.

One of the causes for concern is the fact that most of the unconventional oils need to be heated in order to get them out of the ground. The extraction of these products typically requires a large amount of water.

Extracting shale oil causes several environmental concerns, depending on the type of extraction that is being used. Mining oil shale causes carbon dioxide to be released as well as other pollutants and oxides. This release is caused by the heating of the shale. There is also concern about some of the chemicals from the shale mixing into the ground water through either seeping or as runoff from the process. There are currently processes being researched and developed to help alleviate some of these potentially threatening environmental concerns.

Converting natural gas and coal into oil causes mass amounts of carbon dioxide to be released into the atmosphere. Additionally, the method of extracting these resources causes negative impacts to

the environment as well. There has been research done that shows planting certain types of plants in the area can help reduce the effect of releasing carbon dioxide into the soil in the area. It also helps enhance the methane and oil recovery.

Economic Impact

Unconventional oil is going to have a large economic impact in the future as the oil wells continue to be depleted and other sources of fuel become more and more necessary.

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