

## **Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs 2008 Resolutions**

### **RES. NO. 2: SUPPORT FOR GROWING AND EATING ORGANIC PRODUCE**

**BACKGROUND:** 6.6 BILLION people depend on the thin skin of the Earth we call soil. For 60 years civilization has been able to feed a rapidly growing population by dumping cheap chemical fertilizers and pesticides derived from oil on our agricultural soils to increase production. Massive degradation of soil, loss of organic matter, pollution, and erosion are the ruinous results of these practices. The "synthetic" approach to agriculture has disrupted the pieces of the soil puzzle that were the key to its ability to feed human populations for thousands of years. Up until now fertilizers and pesticides derived from petroleum have been relatively cheap - they are no longer cheap. Farmers in North Dakota paid \$850 a ton this year for urea nitrogen fertilizer as compared to \$175 a ton a few years ago.

For 30 years, total acreage of productive farm land has declined in the U.S. Farm costs are sky high and the largest percentage of the conventional farm budget is for chemical fertilizer derived from petroleum. We can no longer afford to use 50 gallons of petroleum to grow an acre of corn. We cannot afford to utilize only half the chemical fertilizer on a field and have the rest wash away, where it contaminates groundwater, lakes, streams and oceans. We cannot afford to lose topsoil, knowing that it takes thousands of years to form. We cannot afford to have agriculture be a large producer of greenhouse gases and be a major contributor to global warming.

Fortunately there are alternatives to how we grow our food (and how we eat) that are both economical and ecological. Organic farming methods do not use chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They decrease our reliance on petroleum and to enable storage of vast amounts of carbon in the soil where it benefits crop production rather than in the atmosphere where it promotes global warming. Organic treatment using manure, legumes and mychorrizal inoculations maintains or increases soil fertility and soil carbon content 3 to 5 times as compared to conventional agriculture plots.

Biological inoculants are being used that improve nutrients and water capture and suppress disease naturally without using toxic chemicals. These same organisms can pump carbon into the soil, which can immediately help reduce global warming emissions and our reliance on fossil fuels.

Without cheap fertilizer and the cheap oil to make them, conventional agriculture cannot be sustained.

**RESOLUTION:** The FWOC supports changing to organic growing methods to grow our food because organic produce is safer, more nutritious and can positively affect our own ability to survive.

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