

Resolution on the Environment

WHEREAS, our tradition teaches us that "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24); and

WHEREAS, our liturgy proclaims that "The whole Earth is full of God's glory"; and

WHEREAS, the Torah teaches us that "... the Earth is Mine, you are My tenants" (Leviticus 25:23); and

WHEREAS, our tradition warns us that "Now all that I am going to create for you I have already created. Think about this and do not corrupt and desolate My world; for if you do corrupt or desolate it, there will be no one to set it right after you" (Kohelet Rabbah 7:28); and

WHEREAS, Jewish law commands "bal tashchit" -- "you shall not wantonly destroy"; and

WHEREAS, our tradition obligates every Jew to work for tikkun olam, the repair of the World; and

WHEREAS, the devastating despoliation of our environment, directly or indirectly contributed to by the vast majority of the human inhabitants of the Earth, increasingly threatens the health and, indeed, the very existence of animal and plant life on the Earth, including human life; and

WHEREAS, much can be achieved by adhering to the fundamental, yet simple, principle of not wasting our resources; and

WHEREAS, each of us can make significant contributions to preserving our environment in our homes, our synagogues, our communities, and our workplaces;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot ("FRCH") that FRCH shall:

I. AIR

A. Air Toxins

Support legislation by U.S. and Canadian federal, state, and provincial governments to minimize the emissions of toxic substances into the air by requiring sources of air toxins to install the best available control technology.

B. Greenhouse Effect

Support international efforts to reduce both worldwide carbon dioxide emissions and worldwide deforestation in order to stave off, or at least lessen the impact of, the "greenhouse effect" and potentially significant global warming.

C. Acid Rain

Support legislation by the U.S. federal government to significantly reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from coal-powered electric plants to protect American and Canadian lakes, trees, and other natural resources from the searing effects of acid rain.

D. Ozone Smog

Support legislation and regulations by U.S. and Canadian federal, state, provincial, and local governments to reduce significantly emissions that produce atmospheric ozone at levels harmful to human health and natural resources.

E. Stratospheric Ozone Depletion

Support international efforts to eliminate the production and use of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons as soon as possible.

II. WATER

A. Agricultural Run-Off

Support legislation and regulations by U.S. and Canadian federal, state, and provincial governments, as well as by international bodies, to reduce the use of agricultural pesticides and herbicides and to reduce the rate of agricultural soil erosion in order to protect water resources.

B. Discharge Limitations

Support the strict enforcement of U.S. Clean Water Act limitations on discharges of pollutants and toxic substances into waterways.

C. Wetland Protection

Recognize the importance of wetland ecosystems and support the stringent enforcement of U.S. Clean Water Act limitations on the "development" of wetlands.

D. Ocean Protection

Support international efforts to ban ocean dumping and protect our oceans and their resources.

III. HAZARDOUS AND NON-HAZARDOUS WASTES

A. Waste Minimization

Encourage industrial and commercial facilities to re-examine their production of wastes, both hazardous and non-hazardous, and to develop processes and methods to minimize waste production, including waste recycling.

B. Residential Waste Minimization

Promote and support local initiatives to minimize residential waste, such as regulations to recycle paper, cans, bottles, and plastics, to encourage and/or require the use of recycled and recyclable goods, to ban land disposal of yard wastes, and to develop residential hazardous waste disposal programs.

C. Hazardous Waste Disposal

Support the strict enforcement of U.S. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act requirements concerning the proper transport, storage, and disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes.

D. Abandoned Hazardous Waste Sites

Support efforts to monitor closely the number and extent of clean-ups of abandoned hazardous waste sites.

E. Hazardous Waste Export

Support legislation by the U.S. federal government to ban the export of U.S. wastes unless the importing nation will be treating those wastes with at least the same degree of care as would be required if the wastes were disposed of in the United States.

IV. WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

A. Conservation Areas

Support the creation and maintenance of conservation areas by governments and private bodies to provide habitats for indigenous flora and fauna.

B. Endangered Species

Support the strict enforcement of national and international laws and treaties protecting endangered species.

V. INSECTICIDES, HERBICIDES, AND FUNGICIDES

A. Pesticide Use

Support policies designed to discourage and minimize the use of chemical pesticides which may endanger the public health, wildlife, and our water resources.

B. Pesticides in Food

Support legislation and regulations at the U.S. and Canadian federal, state, and provincial levels to monitor, identify, and restrict the levels of pesticides in the food supply.

VI. RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

A. Support the use of public and private resources to increase dramatically the funding of research concerning environmental issues, including (i) energy conservation, (ii) renewable energy sources, (iii) waste minimization techniques, (iv) alternatives to gas-powered internal combustion engines, (v) hazardous wastes detoxification, and (vi) the impact of global warming.

B. Support the use of public and private resources to fund programs designed to educate the public, and especially our youth, about environmental issues, problems, and potential solutions.

VII. ETHICAL INVESTING

Consider the ecological practices of companies when making investment decisions.

VIII. INVOLVEMENT OF FRCH CONGREGATIONS AND HAVUROT

A. Education

Urge its member congregations and havurot to develop educational programs, for all age groups, designed to increase their members' awareness of the environmental issues, problems, and potential solutions discussed in this resolution.

B. Religious Programming

Urge its member congregations and havurot to celebrate Tu B'Shvat in ways that link Jewish tradition and environmental concerns.

C. Social Action

Urge its member congregations and havurot to work with FRCH on environmental problems in all of the ways outlined in this resolution and to undertake social action projects involving, among other things:

- (i) recycling and use of recycled products;
- (ii) ceasing the use of styrofoam products;
- (iii) car pooling;
- (iv) composting of yard wastes and use of organic lawn care products and non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning products;
- (v) planting trees; and
- (vi) promoting the celebration of Earth Day 1990.

