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Column Title: Community Enviro-Line
Column Article Title: Ethanol Is Not As Awesome As Walking
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"If you care about greenhouse gases then this expansion of the corn biofuel industry is going in the wrong direction."
This is a quote from Alex Farrell at the University of California, Berkeley and he is commenting on a study published in the journal *Science* last month. Researchers found that biofuels – like the corn-derived ethanol that we environmentalists once had such high hopes for – might end up contributing double the carbon dioxide to the atmosphere as gasoline over a thirty year period.

If you need a moment to collect yourself, I understand. It's taken me three weeks.

The study found that when food crops such as corn and soy are diverted away from hungry mouths to feed the even more ravenous demands of our fuel supply, agriculture expands. Tim Searchinger, a visiting scholar at Princeton University and lead author of the study, puts it this way: "...If people around the world are going to continue to eat the same amount that they're already eating, you have to replace that food somewhere else."

That 'somewhere else' isn't pretty. People across the globe need to plant crops and to do so they clear-cut forests, burn down wooded areas, and wreck natural agricultural systems. The destruction of greenery coupled with the combustion of organics adds huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the air.

Mr. Searchinger sums it up for us: "Right now there's little doubt that ethanol is making global warming worse."

Sigh.

This is some bad news for sure but I'd be lying by writing that it isn't tinged in silver lining. Learning of this research reminded me of a topic I've often discussed with fellow Kentucky environmental educators. They complain about the indefatigable belief that science will somehow save us from ecological disaster. It seems that when people assume that physicists across the country are discovering solutions to planetary doom, they decide that there's no need to change their lifestyle. Why trade in the gas guzzling truck when a scientific superhero will make it ecologically feasible? Why reduce consumerism when we can just fill up said truck with "greener" products?

I do this, too. I get so pumped up on the bright ideas that technology can offer in regards to environmental conservation that I forget the true basics of being a decent eco geek: Reduce what you consume. Reuse what you can and recycle the rest. We can't count on science for magical salvation from our planetary problems. We have to do what we know will affect change even if it's as unexciting as those darn R's we learned in grade school.

I should say that there are other hopes for biofuels. Using ethanol-making materials that don't come from cropland is the brightest hope for its future. Alternative fuels can be squeezed from waste oil and ethanol can be concocted from grasses and garbage. That last idea elates me and well, okay, incites my excitement about the future of science and the environment. You can bet I'll be daydreaming about it when I opt to walk to the grocery instead of climbing into my car.

Visit <http://kyecogeek.blogspot.com/> to investigate Searchinger's study and thumb through some of his critics' rebuttals.

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	Yes, recycle it!	Not allowed!	Anything else?
Plastic	Bottles with #1 or #2 on them, including: Soda bottles Detergent jugs Milk jugs Vitamin containers Shampoo bottles	To be recyclable, plastic must have a spout, or an opening that is smaller than the rest of the container. Because of this, we can't allow items like: Butter/yogurt tubs Buckets Food trays Also, no oil jugs. They're gross.	Please take off the lids. They're a different and not recyclable type of plastic. Oh, and if you get a chance, rinse containers out and squash them flat.
Glass	Any color glass bottle or food jar	Widow glass and drinking glass aren't good, nor is broken glass. We've got to help look out for the guys who pick up our recycling.	Once again, no lids! No corks, either! And rinse out the bottle!
Paper	Oh man. We take all kinds of paper.		
Metal			