



## The Environment

Since 1991, the Rabbinical Assembly has passed over 15 resolutions on environmental issues including the Endangered Species Act, decreasing our dependence on fossil fuels, global warming, environmental issues in Israel, and more.

As far back as 1991, the Rabbinical Assembly called for:

- Growing, producing and manufacturing food and food products in a way that protects the earth
- Using consumables such as paper products, cleaning materials, etc that are both recycled and recyclable
- Investing in companies that practice environmentally friendly practices.

In papers submitted to the Republican and Democratic National Committees in 1992, the RA called for our leaders to enact legislation promoting energy efficiency, reduction of waste, recycling and other practices that promote environmental sustainability. It also called for local communities to convene business and governmental leaders to implement these practices. In 1997 the Rabbinical Assembly produced a High Holiday packet on the environment with the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). It contains sample sermons by Gordon Tucker and Larry Troster, text teaching by Larry Troster, policy material, resources for study and action, and an article entitled “Learning to Live with Less” by Chancellor Ismar Schorsch.

In 1994 and again in 2007, the Rabbinical Assembly called for its congregations to recycle and to reduce waste in both its institutions and homes of members. It also called for our institutions to conduct environmental audits, to integrate Jewish environmental education into the educational curriculum, and to avoid throwing leftover food away after *smakhot* (celebrations). In 2007, the resolution posited the following specific program:

- Energy audits of the facilities the institutions occupy;
- Purchase of energy from sustainable sources;
- Implementation of reduction of waste through recycling and limiting the use of disposables;
- Use of non-toxic cleaning, lawn, and garden care products;
- Educational programs in the community teaching the Jewish sources of environmentalism and encouraging members of their community to green their own homes; and
- Encouragement of their constituents to reduce energy use by driving high mileage vehicles, using public transportation, and carpooling.

At various times, the RA has called on the US government and the governments of other nations to oppose legislation that would undermine laws that safeguard the country’s environment (1995); protect the diversity of our species in the environment (1996); enact legislation to promote global environmental health such as passage of clean air standards, reducing toxic waste, regulating hazardous materials, and testing of products before they are brought to market for their compliances with environmental regulations (1997, 1999, 2003, 2007); and promote environmental reforms and



global development that would help the citizens of the world live within the bounds of the capacities of the earth (1997).

The Rabbinical Assembly has passed several resolutions on the issue of global warming and climate change (1998, 1999, 2003, 2013). These resolutions have called upon elected officials to pass legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including financial incentives such as a carbon tax; enforce high regulation standards; regulate harmful chemicals and substances; and aggressively support pollution prevention measures. The RA has called upon its members to advocate for energy audits of their own institutions and to promote EPA Energy Star standards for all future building projects. It has also urged members to educate others about the value of recycling, green transportation options such as public transit and high-mileage vehicles, and energy efficient practices in the home.

In 2000, the Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution calling for the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty for several reasons, including the impact of nuclear arms on global warming and the global environment.

The Rabbinical Assembly has also called upon the US government to support strong emissions and CAFE standards with respect to fuel efficiency, most recently in 2008.

In 2008, the Rabbinical Assembly called on the institutions of the Conservative Movement to sign onto a Green Covenant to reduce our carbon footprint and to call on the government of our countries to reduce carbon emissions by 50%; to promote the Solar Ner Tamid; to support legislation at the local and federal levels on CAFE standards and the use of renewable resources; to improve public transportation to our own institutions and to our local areas; and to encourage investment policies to enhance a socially responsible portfolio.

In May 2009, the RA participated in the first ever Sustainability Conference sponsored by the Jewish community. Hosted by COEJL, Jewish groups from across the spectrum who own or run buildings participated in the conference. The Conservative Movement (represented by various arms) presented a well-thought out and comprehensive plan for sustainability in our institutions.

In 2012, The Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution on hydraulic fracking in the United States, asking the EPA and other government agencies to ensure that companies engaging in fracking are properly regulated, and that all environmental concerns are addressed.

A common theme through many of our resolutions has been supporting the development of a comprehensive national energy policy as a matter of **national security**. A policy that increases United States energy independence by reducing dependence upon fossil fuels (particularly oil from the Middle East) and developing efficient, clean, and affordable energy alternatives is undoubtedly a critical national interest. This should include significant increases in vehicle fuel economy standards, research and development of energy efficient automobiles, and the building and increased use of energy efficient mass transit.