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HEADLINE: Scientist defends CO[2]

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Touting carbon dioxide (CO[2]) as "an elixir of life," Sylvan Wittwer, senior scientific advisor to the Greening Earth Society, told guests at **Western Fuels Association's** (WFA) recent annual energy conference that CO[2] is not a pollutant but is, rather, "a universally free subsidy available to all" that enhances the resources of the earth.

Wittwer, director emeritus of the Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station at East Lansing, said the benefits of rising CO[2] levels in the atmosphere far outweigh any negative effects.

"Carbon dioxide, combined with the energy of sunlight and water, results in the biological productivity of earth through the process of photosynthesis," he said. "Photosynthesis is the most important biochemical process on earth. Food production is the most important resource that we have. It's what agriculture is all about."

The Greening Earth Society was formed by WFA general manager Fred Palmer to present an alternative view to claims by environmentalists that increasing amounts of CO[2] are a leading cause of global warming and that CO[2] should be tightly regulated.

Palmer said he's waging an uphill battle against a well-funded environmental lobby that has coalesced around the scientifically unproven notion the earth may warm to cataclysmic proportions in the next century and that humans are at least partly responsible. Believers in this theory want fossil fuels replaced by renewable energy sources.

In his speech, Wittwer said global warming, if it occurs, "will be better than a global cooling for most of the biomass of the earth, such as food, fiber crops, forest lands, and rangelands, especially in the Northern Hemisphere where the limiting factors for plant growth are both low temperature and inadequate water."

On a warmer earth, growing seasons would be lengthened. "Winter wheat, soybeans, corn, and many other crops can be grown over a much wider area," Wittwer said.

Elevated levels of CO[2], he added, "will partially compensate for deficiencies of both light and water and ameliorate both adversely high and low temperatures and the effect of air pollution." Moreover, the rising level of atmospheric CO[2] enhances plant water-use efficiency, he said.

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Earth Day activists fume over corporate 'greenwashing'

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By Jennifer Harper
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It may take a shovel, or even a backhoe, to dig out the truth about Earth Day. After 28 years, this old hippie holiday has turned into a motley forum for the righteous, the corporate and the goofy.

Combined, they send a very mixed message.

The first Earth Day found the young and restless scurrying in the dirt, fretful of DDT and perhaps weeding under the influence, all to celebrate "The First National Environmental Teach-In."

Yesterday, Earth Day was a hefty photo opportunity with feel-

good environmentalism in full flower.

"It's all ironic. Earth Day has ceased to be about the environment. It's in a decline," said David Ridenour of the National Center for Public Policy Research, which nevertheless organized an Earth Day Information Center for media.

Decline or not, Earth Day is at least good theater.

Members of the Congressional Bike Caucus went for a spin down Constitution Avenue while the Boat Owners Association picked up trash in a Virginia stream. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association pledged it "will reach out to

the entire agricultural community through Earth Day 1999."

The National Association of Manufacturers offered a daylong event on the Mall touting the raised enviro-consciousness of large corporations, while the U.S. Public Interest Research Group held a demonstration nearby to protest it.

It's all just "greenwashing" to many activists, who claim big companies mask their agendas with slick posturing.

"They shouldn't be able to co-opt Earth Day to forward their corporate members' images," said David Chorlton of Earth Day Ari-

zona.

Meanwhile, the Greening Earth Society — sponsored by the Western Fuels Association — announced that the Earth's climate has improved. "We want people to know the truth about our planet's health and the positive effect carbon dioxide has on it," said its director, Marianne Brewster.

The journal Nature also announced yesterday that the planet has had the hottest weather in 600 years — climatologists blame it on "man's additions to fossil fuels."

The official Earth Day message by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt was emotional indeed. "Hope is the garden I tend today," he said.

"But too often, conflict is my companion, despair my next door neighbor."

Not to be outdone, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman gave a speech, then presided over a farmers' market.

Earth Day was also a showcase for groups with long names.

"The best chance we have to improve the environment is to break the stranglehold of the command and control policies promoted by the EPA and the extremist environmental lobby," said Scott Spendlove of the Energy, Environment, Natural Resources and Agricultural Task Force for the

American Legislative Exchange Council.

Bipartisan civility was not in the air in Denver yesterday. Some Colorado Republicans may complain to the public school system after 50 fourth-graders attended a protest of Republican Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell's environmental voting record.

One teacher mistook a Sierra Club political rally for a simple Earth Day program on endangered species. The kids drew chalk pictures of animals on the sidewalk but got an anti-Campbell earful.

The teacher, according to one spokesman, is "feeling used."