

Nov. 18, 1971

## Organic Farm Proposal

The farm is to be an organic farm modeled after the Santa Cruz and the J.I. Rodale experimental farms. Organic means that no chemical fertilizers or pesticides are used and that the machinery is muscle-powered and/or non-polluting.

Because the production of food is the very basis of human existence and because any agricultural endeavor involves altering the natural environment, the farm is a vital experiment for any program concerned with designing in harmony with the environment. The prime consideration will be sound ecological planning. Environmental study and design will be one of the main responsibilities and learning experiences of the farm group.

The farm is intended to serve as a learning resource area where new ideas and skills can be implemented and where different life styles can be investigated in a natural setting. Improved methods for farming organically, such as alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, can be explored. Planning for and with the environment is necessarily inherent.

Initially, the farm will be limited to basic research and building projects - soil and vegetation surveys, repairs to or removal of existing structures, land-use surveys. As additional information is gathered and as skills develop, the farm and people and projects will expand. The farm has long range potentials for studies in future years when more land can be put into production, animals can be obtained and new structures can be erected.

Governance will be by general consensus of the community. This will be feasible because the farm will be run as a community. The people making the decisions will be those putting time and energy into the project and who have a working knowledge of the farm. It

follows that, because of the involvement and consequent commitment, any judgments will be genuinely in the best interest of the environment. Governance by committee will be avoided because: <sup>(1)</sup> farm members will be competent enough to make decisions, <sup>(2)</sup> committees would damage the farm as a community by concentrating power and <sup>(3)</sup> communication problems would result by the resultant isolation of knowledge from the general group.

### Basic Outline

- 1) Come up with a land use plan consisting of (a) soil survey, (b) land survey of boundaries and contours, (c) buildings and other structures, (d) water drainage, (e) catalog of plant life and wildlife habitat types. This information will be cataloged in an overlay map system patterned after Ian McHarg's plan as described in Design with Nature. These studies will be used as our reference for land use decision, extending into a planting plan for spring. This plan will include a map of how the farm will look after planting (size and location of fields, crop location, type of planting style used, where other farm functions will occur). At this time, there is a contour and boundary map of the farm and soil and drainage surveys are in progress as well as an evaluation of existing structures.
- 2) Begin compost pile by November 25. In order to build up an adequate supply of compost by spring, ~~use a winter~~ <sup>will be used</sup> composting method. This includes remodeling one of the out buildings as a compost shelter as composting must be done inside during the winter to maintain necessary heat. A garbage shredder must be constructed in order to break down large pieces of garbage to facilitate faster decomposition. Because it is already late in the year, it is imperative that we begin immediately to allow decomposition processes to take place. Under way are plans to gather compost from the school.
- 3) Repair building by January. The buildings for agricultural and craft use, such as canning, storage, weaving, need to be repaired for use in the spring. They will also serve as a meeting place for farm community planning and workshops this winter.

- 4) Plan and possibly build a greenhouse or hothouse by February.

This will be a fairly temporary structure, probably dome shaped and sided with plastic.

- 5) This winter, the desirability and feasibility of animal husbandry on the farm for this year will be discussed and studied. An extensive study and evaluation of what animals the farm can support and the desirability, benefits and maintainance will be undertaken.

The future of the farm is yet to be decided but certain aspects of the farm's development has and will continue to be discussed this year so that plans might be developed before problems arise.