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The war between nature & science continues

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Genetically modified (GM) plants are a growing science in the Midwest. Corn and other items commonly found in your local produce section are being genetically modified to withstand droughts, floods, and insects/insecticides. Though these seem like momentous breakthroughs in the farming community, recent discoveries suggest that GM corn may not be the best for our water supply.

GM corn contains a bacterial protein meant to repel insects. In the no-till process often used in the Midwest to prevent erosion, the leftover crops are decomposing, releasing this bacterial protein into the soil. Over time runoff carries this protein to the nearby rivers and streams, contaminating our water supply. But it’s not just this specific protein that is finding its way into the water; pesticides used on the corn are also posing a problem to the environment. GM corn is created to resist the damaging effects of pesticides, which allows farmers to spray their fields generously with the chemicals. Runoff then brings those chemicals into the water supply. A trace of Monsanto’s popular Round Up and this GM protein have been discovered in the groundwater supply. Scientists are uncertain what harmful effects this bacterial protein will have on people, but we cannot assume that these effects are possible.

Until this issue becomes a risk to public health, there will likely not be a bill passed to limit the use of pesticides or crop engineering in the U.S. This is now becoming a debate about what is more important—corn or water? In the Midwest where our livelihood relies on the crops that feed the cattle and make much of the food consumers buy and eat, corn is our gold. This issue will have to be decided by each individual farmer. To spray or not to spray, that is the question.