Climate Change: Important Spotlight for Sustainable Population Advocacy

Climate change is just one of the repercussions of growing the human enterprise well past the sustainable capacity of our planet’s life-supporting ecosystems. One would think policymakers, journalists and the public around the world would be up in arms over mounting fresh water crises, species extinction, fisheries collapse, fertile soil depletion, peak energy and increasing violence. Yes, these all get a little attention, but that attention never focuses on their cause – overshoot.

The destabilization of our climate, finally, seems to have rocketed to the top of our attention list. Also – as reported by World Population Balance Research Associate Alan Ware in this newsletter – its connection to human population is finally getting attention. You may find it interesting that some scientists and sustainability activists don’t think climate change is the worst of the crises we face.

Ten years ago, Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich (co-author of The Population Bomb), told me:

“I’m glad that people are paying attention to climate change, but I’m sad that they don’t see how extremely serious it could be, the extreme steps that would really need to be taken to do anything about it, and the fact that many other environmental problems – like decay of the epidemiological environment, toxification of the planet, land use change, and particularly the destruction of biodiversity – could end up in the long term being much worse.”

What climate change has going for it is that it feels like a ticking time bomb. The scientific community’s focus on metrics, timelines and specific CO2 goals makes it more visible and more urgent. While it still hasn’t achieved an appropriate level of visibility and urgency, it is by far getting more attention than other symptoms of overshoot. Sustainable population advocates are smart to take advantage of it.

Although there are hopeful signs human overpopulation is finally being discussed and reported on, there still remains too much caution. The tiptoeing and tap-dancing hasn’t completely subsided. Even on the climate front, we’re still behaving as if this is a 2-alarm fire when it’s actually a 10.

If you’re looking for ways to advance the cause of sustainable population, share the Lund University study and the latest World Scientists’ Warning with everyone you know. Do the same with our Sustainable Population Resolution. You’ll find more about all three of these in the Sustainable Population Resolution story in this newsletter. The Overpopulation Podcast and our email Updates are also important to share.

We cannot rest. We can’t coast. We must continue cranking up the volume on the conversation to raise public awareness of just how critical the climate and overpopulation crises are, and their connection.

Listen to the Latest Overpopulation Podcasts

In the latest episodes of The Overpopulation Podcast, Dave Gardner continues leading in-depth explorations of solving overpopulation. The podcast fills a unique role in the podcast universe as it focuses directly on the overpopulation issue and how to solve it. That uniqueness has helped build an international audience and greatly expand WPB’s international reach — almost half of all listeners live outside the United States. And those thousands of listeners come from all parts of the globe – 165 countries and growing! You can access all podcast episodes from the WPB home page.

Episode 10: “Tap Dancing Around Overpopulation”
In a new format for the podcast, Dave Gardner is joined by staff members Carolyn VandenDolder, Joan Philips, and Alan Ware. They discuss journalists’ avoidance of the overpopulation issue and the connection between recent extreme weather events in the U.S. and overpopulation.

Episode 11: “Capability of Making A Difference”
Dave talks with Robin Maynard, director of Population Matters, a leading sustainable population organization based in the United Kingdom. Although they find continued obstacles in discussing overpopulation, Dave and Robin see encouraging signs that sustainable population is moving into the broader sustainability discussion.

Episode 12: “What the Media Gets Wrong on Overpopulation”
Overpopulation and the impacts of human population growth have been getting more media coverage in recent years. But how thorough, unbiased and accurate is the coverage? Dave is joined by Carolyn, Joan, and Alan as they examine two radio programs and what the shows get wrong (and sometimes right) in covering overpopulation.

Episode 13: “Teaching Students About Overshoot”
Dave is joined by Chris Bystroff, Professor of Biological Sciences and Computer Science. Chris shares what he’s observed about the knowledge and attitudes of college students enrolled in his population course. Bystroff also shares exciting news about his research project to develop an easily reversible contraceptive vaccine.
Since 1999, philanthropist Frank Babka has donated several thousands of hours to advance the cause of sustainable population as a public educator for World Population Balance. Recently, Frank decided it was time to retire from public speaking.

In his nearly 20 years of speaking for WPB, Frank has given 3,475 presentations to over 113,000 students in 188 schools! In addition to educating students, Frank has also spoken to thousands of adults in churches, clubs, conferences, and media interviews throughout the region.

In thousands of presentations, Frank was able to show the up-close effects of overpopulation through segments of video footage he’s amassed from his wide-ranging world travels. For many audiences, especially younger students, the videos help provide a richer, fuller context for understanding overpopulation. The students see streets clogged with traffic, skies filled with smoke, and the grinding poverty of the world’s poorest in the planet’s largest slums. With the visual proof in hand, Frank has led many tens of thousands of people in seeing the connection between the world’s troubles and humanity’s ever-growing and unsustainable numbers.

WPB will continue Frank’s tradition of spreading the sustainable population message through in-person presentations. Staff members Alan Ware and Carolyn VandenDolder offer regular presentations at schools, service clubs and other adult groups; and they train and equip public speaking volunteers.

WPB also continues growing its international presence. Through our podcasts, social media presence, and website, WPB is spreading the sustainable population message to people far beyond the Twin Cities and the surrounding region. As interest grows from people around the world, it’s clear that World Population Balance is truly becoming more of the international, world-focused organization our name implies.

Through his dedication to the cause of sustainable population, Frank Babka helped over 100,000 people understand the international scope of overpopulation. Frank will be greatly missed in his role as public educator for World Population Balance, but he’ll continue his involvement in his new role on the WPB Board of Advisors. From all of us at WPB — staff and members — thank you Frank for your amazing service to the cause of creating a more sustainable planet!

Frank recently shared some of his thoughts on his involvement with World Population Balance and the population issue.

I grew up in the small-town Midwest but was never more than several hours away from the massive Chicago metro area, which is one of the world’s busiest hubs for industry and commerce. I helped my relatives on their farm in Nebraska every summer and was always very interested in how humans meet their needs. Along with that, I realized quickly at a young age that it takes a lot of resources to provide for people. However, this creates a lot of problems and challenges, like waste, noise, pollution, congestion, technology conflicts, loss of wildlife habitat, etc.

For a number of years I worked as a bulk freight transportation manager in the business world. I was lucky to retire at 37 due to the success of the business my parents and I owned. I then wanted to spend all my time focusing on global issues and problems. I’ve always been interested in the entire world “out there.”

I had long been aware of global population and that we reached 5 billion people in the late 1980s (and today we’re at 7.5 billion and growing). In my mind, population is the most profound and universal challenge underlying all the various national and global issues.

In early 1999 I contacted David Paxson, whom I heard speak several years earlier. Ever since then it’s been enjoyable and sobering to speak to audiences of all ages about these challenges. I continue to be a strong supporter and donor to WPB. I have admired their creative approach to addressing this major global challenge.

I also support countless other organizations that are helping needy people. Many of them are encouraging young couples to voluntarily have small families and engage in birth spacing.

The world will be better off when people voluntarily stop their population growth and come to realize that economic models can view population de-growth as prosperous and successful.
Sustainable Population Resolution Makes the Population – Climate Change Connection

Climate change is increasingly recognized as an enormous threat to the future of humanity and all other life on the planet. During the relatively stable climate of the past 10,000 years, the human population has exploded from only a few million to over 7.5 billion today. Climate scientists predict that in the coming decades we’ll face increasing frequency of both droughts and floods, more intense heat waves, and rising sea levels. Food insecurity will rise, climate refugees will increase, and the potential for conflict and war will climb.

Smaller families mean fewer carbon emitters. Smaller families also mean a smaller future human population that can adapt more easily to the climate disruption that’s coming.

In the past year a significant new study was carried out at Lund University in Sweden that helped make clear the population - climate change connection. The study found that, in developed countries, having one fewer child with all their expected descendants saves 6 times as much carbon emissions as the next 11 “green” actions combined – including living car-free, not flying, buying green energy, and eating a plant-based diet. The study was featured throughout global media including NPR, Fortune, the Guardian, and many others.

And now – coming 25 years after the landmark 1992 Warning to Humanity – over 15,000 scientists in over 180 countries have signed a Second Warning to Humanity. The authors give a clear call to action for humanity, noting:

As most political leaders respond to pressure, scientists, media influencers, and lay citizens must insist that their governments take immediate action as a moral imperative to current and future generations of human and other life. With a groundswell of organized grassroots efforts, dogged opposition can be overcome and political leaders compelled to do the right thing. It is also time to re-examine and change our individual behaviors, including limiting our own reproduction (ideally to replacement level at most) and drastically diminishing our per capita consumption of fossil fuels, meat, and other resources.

In recent weeks, the Minneapolis Sustainable Population Meetup group has designed a Sustainable Population Resolution that can be used as part of the “groundswell of grassroots efforts” the scientists call for. The Resolution seeks to help make explicit the population - climate change connection for both political parties and environmental groups. Please use the Resolution to both educate and advocate for sustainable population within the various groups you belong to. You can also find the Resolution at the WPB website under the “Take Action” tab.

Sustainable Population Resolution

Whereas climate change is the most egregious sign that we are currently living unsustainably and imperiling the future;¹ and

Whereas the Lund University Study quantitatively concludes having one fewer child per family in developed countries reduces the CO₂ equivalent of more than 10 times the combined CO₂ reduction of the next three highest-impact actions;² and

Whereas Global Footprint data indicate a drastic reduction in both population and consumption is required in the United States for us to live sustainably;³ and

Whereas population reduction through lower birthrates is more humane than population reduction through increased misery and death rates,

Be it resolved that the ______________ Party (or organization), in addressing climate change, will advocate for voluntary small families as an integral part of its response.

Footnotes:
1 World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity, Second Notice published November 13, 2017: http://scientists.forestry.oregonstate.edu/sites/sw/files/Rippl
3 Global Footprint Network: http://data.footprintnetwork.org/#/

Data indicate that a sustainable US population, living at a European standard of living (2/3 of the current American standard), would be 150 million people.
World Population Balance
Contribution / Membership / Change-of-Address Form

Please detach and return this form with your tax-deductible contribution. Please make checks payable to World Population Balance and mail them to

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Let Environmental Groups Know That Solving Overpopulation Is Essential

Many of us have experienced the frustration of not having the population issue addressed by environmental groups who would seem to be natural allies to our cause. Environmental organizations need to know that any environmental cause is a lost cause unless population is addressed. Now, you can visit the World Population Balance website and under the “Take Action” tab find a sample letter that can help you make the case to environmental groups that solving overpopulation is essential to achieving environmental goals. The letter template is based on a letter that WPB Advisory Board Member Karen Shragg wrote for her book, *Move Upstream: A Call to Solve Overpopulation*. Feel free to use the sample letter as a template to customize as you see fit. Thanks for helping us get the word to environmental groups around the world that a smaller human population is essential in creating a future worth inheriting – for us humans and all other species!

Raise Overpopulation Awareness Wherever You Go – Order Your Free Bumper Sticker Today!

Choose one of the bumper stickers below and we’ll mail it to you at no cost to you. Visit worldpopulationbalance.org – and order yours today!

Blue on white  Blue on yellow

Become Overpopulation Literate
www.WorldPopulationBalance.org

Join or Create Your Own Sustainable Population Meetup

In this world of increasingly electronic communication it is encouraging and motivating to meet face to face. The Minneapolis Sustainable Population Meetup continues to meet in the Twin Cities area. Meetups generally take place on the 2nd Saturday morning of every month in the Minneapolis area. The topics of the meetups are open to attendee input and can change according to participants' interests. If you’re outside the Twin Cities, we are putting together steps, tips, and guidance to get additional groups up and going. E-mail us at meetups@worldpopulationbalance.org with any questions. Or be part of the conversation by joining at: meetup.com/Minneapolis-Overpopulation-Meetup/. You’ll get notifications of upcoming meeting date, place and topic. The World Population Balance Facebook events page also has meeting information.

We would hate to lose touch, but this could be your last printed *Balanced View* newsletter! If we haven’t heard from you in a few years, make sure to let us know you want to continue receiving the newsletter. Please e-mail office@worldpopulationbalance.org or leave a message at 612-869-1640. If you would like to receive *Balanced View* via e-mail, make sure we have your current e-mail address.

*Thanks for your commitment to confronting the overpopulation crisis!*