

# WORLD POPULATION BALANCE

Population education — promoting awareness about stabilization to benefit **everyone!** \*

\* Pro-life and pro-choice members respectfully agree to disagree in order to promote fair and humane population stabilization.

February, 2003

## Ecological Footprint Fills Science Museum

The meeting rooms of the Science Museum of Minnesota were filled on October 25th and 26 for two exciting population conferences jointly organized by World Population Balance and 17 other regional and national organizations.

Friday's event, "Beyond 6 Billion: Population Studies for the 21st Century", attracted teachers and students from across the state. David Paxson keynoted this event by challenging everyone to prioritize population education at all levels: "It is critical that we educators teach people the realities of the population issue -- through our natural and social science curricula, and

through all other classes in whatever ways the issue fits."

David also unveiled the exciting new video produced by World Population Balance, "Minnesota Population". (For more information, see page 3.)

Teachers and students then participated in several excellent workshops during the rest of the day. Attendees left with great enthusiasm and many ideas about how to advance population education in their schools.

Saturday's conference, "Choosing Our Future: Population and Our Ecological Footprint" brought several experts from around the country

who highlighted the progress being made to raise awareness of continuing rapid population growth upon our declining resource base.

Ann Hancock of Sustainable Sonoma (California) presented the Ecological Footprint concept and calculation as a way to understand the impact of our actions on Earth's resources.

Currently in the world there are about 4.5 acres of bioproductive land available per person. However, if all 6.2 billion of us used that much, there would be no productive land left for other species to use. The truth is that most of the world's population actually uses less than 4.5 acres per person. Meanwhile, the average American uses 24 acres!

Hancock asserts that we could enjoy a comparable quality of life with a much smaller Footprint. European industries, banks, and governments are using Ecological Footprint calculations to help them reduce their impact on natural resources. Conference attendees then worked together to calculate the

*see Footprint on page 3*



### Challenge Match Update

We thank each of you who responded so generously to our matching grant challenge. We have received several thousand additional dollars toward the generous challenge amount of \$25,000 from The World Population Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation by this coming August. Thank you. Your increased financial help is essential to our stability and to the continuation of our educational mission.

If you have not yet contributed, we need your support more than ever before. During the past year our foundation funding has decreased, and it is imperative that we replace those funds to avoid cutting vital programs.

Every dollar you contribute will still be doubled; you will be helping to reduce population growth; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing you are a part of the real solution to most of the world's major problems.

If you haven't yet taken advantage of this opportunity to contribute to our mission and double the value of your donation, please consider it! You'll find a donation form on page 3.

Thank you very much for your continuing support!

# From the President

By David Paxson

There is a well-known experiment in which a frog is placed in a pan of hot water. It quickly jumps out to avoid being burned. Next the frog is set in a pan of cool water – on a burner. The frog feels right at home and stays there as the water slowly, ever so slowly, warms up. Eventually the frog dies without ever attempting to jump out! (I have never done this experiment myself, but I know several biologists who have.)



Are humans smarter than frogs? As we continue altering our environment -- destroying and depleting many renewable and non-renewable resources in every corner of the world -- will we “wake up” in time to realize that we are doing irreparable harm to our global home and ourselves? I believe we will! Growing numbers of people are beginning to “get it”.

To help accelerate this awareness it is crucial that you and I do all we can to help others “get it”, too. And, to be successful with others, I am increasingly convinced that we should *not* talk *specifics* about the future -- should not speculate about “how much worse” we believe things will become. Instead, let’s focus upon the trends of the past one or two decades and talk about *them*.

## Office Administrator

We are pleased to introduce our new Office Administrator, Steven McGreevy. Steve brings a wealth of skills, education and experience to us.

Steve lives in Eagan and attended the School of Environmental Studies at the Minnesota Zoo. After graduating from St. Johns University with a degree in Biology and Environmental Studies, Steve journeyed to Japan where he taught English for a year. A few months ago he returned home and entered a Masters of Liberal Studies program at the University of Minnesota. He is concentrating his studies on ecological literacy, sustainable food systems and ecological design. His hope is “To help people better recognize the results of their actions.”

Welcome, Steve! We are delighted to have you with us!

Here are some of the main problems with talking about what *may* happen -- as I have experienced them during the past dozen years of full-time population education efforts:

(1) No one *really* knows what will happen -- even tomorrow, let alone in ten or a hundred years. I often say, “None of us has a crystal ball”.

(2) Since no one *really* knows, that means two people can quickly become deadlocked in a verbal “slug-fest” about what will or won’t happen in the future. And, my experience is that this debate is utterly unwinnable!

(3) To talk about what we *think* will happen only opens us up for challenge -- either about the magnitude of our prediction or the timing or both. I think of those discussions as nit-picking, and I find them a total waste of time! We need to manage our discussions about the population mega-issue so that we keep others focused upon the bigger picture. Often this is a challenge, to be sure.

Therefore, focusing upon what is *already* happening on the planet is tremendously more effective. Facts of what has and is happening are much harder to dismiss. Declines in a long list of major resources during the past twenty years paint a very sobering picture of the damage we humans are doing on the planet.

We *are* smarter than frogs! Let’s keep on hopping out of the hot water and educating our neighbors, friends and relatives to hop out with us.

## Brochures, Logo and Letterhead

A highly dedicated supporter of population stabilization, Carolyn Beckett of Flying Fish Graphics, volunteered several months ago to help us design a new logo, letterhead, brochure and business cards. She contributed countless hours to the cause, and we are thrilled with the final result!

Our new brochure is in full color and includes photos of a congested freeway, an African slum, and a crowd of people. Our new logo, cards and letterhead are very attractive, helping us bring population awareness more powerfully to more people.

Thank you, Caroline, for your wonderful outpouring of creativity in designing such fabulous materials!

*Footprint continued from page 1*

Ecological Footprint of the conference itself.

Bill Ryerson of the Population Media Center spoke about the serial drama (“soap opera”) methodology that has been very successful in changing attitudes toward family size and family planning in developing countries. He estimated that serial dramas cost only 8 cents per viewer, compared to thousands of dollars for treatment and support after the fact. Ryerson encouraged attendees to write letters to our media about the messages and role models presented by U.S. TV programs.

Other presenters included Northwest Environment Watch founder Alan Durning, who described his organization’s progress in bringing more sensible policy to that region, and Terry Gips, who presented the four rules of the Natural Step program.

This was the fourth time we have partnered with the Science Museum and other groups in presenting a major Midwest population conference. We are pleased and highly encouraged that all these groups continue supporting the message to Minnesotans that: (1) population growth is a major world problem and that (2) there are many humane actions we can take to stop this destructive and unsustainable increase in human numbers.

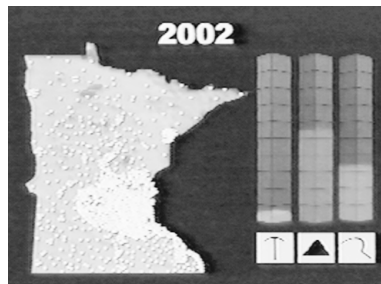
### Minnesota Video Now Available

Our highly anticipated “Minnesota Population” video is now available. Inspired by the well-known “World Population” video that depicts 2000 years of population growth, as lights on a world map pop on faster and faster, “Minnesota Population” puts lights on a state map. Bar graphs next to the map show several key resources declining over time. **This video has a strong impact upon viewers, since they see both population growth and resource depletion at the same time!** (see image at right)

of what we hoped to produce, we had no prior experience in video production. It was Dirk and crew who helped us bring our vision to video.

We are tremendously pleased and proud of our final product. **You have a grand opportunity to increase population awareness right now** by ordering a copy and donating it to your school or church. Our goal is to put at least one copy in every school district in the state. Please join us to accomplish that.

You may order a copy by sending \$20 to: World Population Balance, P.O. Box 23472, Minneapolis, MN 55423. Please write “Video” on your check and enclose the shipping address. We’ll take care of the rest. Thank you.



### Annual Meeting

A brief meeting of the World Population Balance Board will be held March 5th at 1 pm to elect Directors and officers. The meeting will be at our office, Rm 400E, Lincoln Hills School, 7440 Penn Avenue South in Richfield.

If you plan to attend, please call the office at 612-869-1640. Thank you.

### MEMBERSHIP AND CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

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We welcome your contribution at any level.

# Breck Reaches 100!

March 22nd marks an incredible milestone for one of the distinguished, charter members of our Board of Advisors: Walter Breckenridge will celebrate his one hundredth birthday!

For many decades Breck has been a strong voice concerning the need for population stabilization. In his lifetime he has seen world population go from about 1.5 billion to well over 6 billion. He contends this population growth should be seen as the most urgent problem facing humanity today.

Over 50 years ago at the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum Dr. Breckenridge designed and constructed an exhibit just outside the auditorium. It graphically showed the historic growth of population and its almost perpendicular rise.

For years Breck's constant theme has been that we in the United States and the world tend to spend our time, energy, and money addressing symptoms and not the cause of our greatest problems. Pollution of air and water, wars, traffic congestion, disease, hunger, poverty, and destruction of our natural envi-

ronment are all critical problems to address, but any true and lasting solution must also include population stabilization, which is seldom addressed. For years he concluded lectures about wildlife with a strong plea to address population stabilization.

Breck has been particularly concerned about the media's failure to cover this issue. He wrote many newspaper articles to raise the level of population awareness. On November 23, 1991 in the *Star Tribune* he wrote:

*"... we humans have faced and overcome seemingly impossible problems. Are we going to back away from this one simply because it is difficult? We can hope that reasonable and logical thinking will eventually govern our actions after the catastrophic results of overpopulation are pointed out, thoroughly understood and appreciated."*

Breck's career at the Bell Museum began in 1926, and he served as director from 1946 to his retirement in 1969.

We wish Breck a very special 100th birthday and thank him for his invaluable contributions to the mission of World Population Balance.

**Current Population**  
World: 6,271,933,556 -- doubling time 59 years  
U.S.: 293,080,000 -- doubling time 95 years  
Minnesota: 5,072,226 -- doubling time 62 years  
Extrapolated from U.S. Census and Minnesota Planning data

**WORLD POPULATION BALANCE**  
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(ben@worldpopulationbalance.org)

World Population Balance is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to raising awareness about the benefits of population stabilization.  
We present our message through public presentations and conferences, appointments with elected officials, written articles, our newsletter, and media interviews.

## Our Mission

February, 2003

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