O ur radio announcements continue reaching hundreds of thousands each week. Many people are understanding for the first time that increasing population – while many vital resources decline – is unsustainable and must be humanely stopped. For millions of Americans, gaining this very basic awareness is a huge step forward! Here are the three announcements we have aired since August:

“Programming is supported by World Population Balance. Despite famines, wars, diseases, droughts, tsunamis, and even hurricanes, in the past year world population has increased by over 70 million people, net gain. More at World Population Balance dot org.”

“Programming is supported by World Population Balance, a Minnesota non-profit. Humanely slowing and stopping population growth helps conserve oil, giving the world more time to switch to other fuels. More at World Population Balance dot org.”

“Programming is supported by World Population Balance. Humanely slowing and stopping population growth can help to limit the impact on the environment, preserving it for generations to come. More at World Population Balance dot org.”

Here is an encouraging comment from a supporter: “I acknowledge that every effort in environmental, hunger, AIDS, famine, and other disasters depends upon SUCCESSFUL population reduction or stability.… THANK YOU FOR YOUR INDEFATIGABLE EFFORT.”

Radio Raises Awareness

T his fall our nation will reach 300,000,000 people. Much is being made in mainstream media about this milestone. The tone of most of it is “Ain’t this great!”

Given that we are already consuming many resources far faster than they can be replenished, it follows that eventually one of three things will happen. Either (1) per capita consumption will decline, (2) population will decline, or (3) a combination of both. Whether it’s reducing consumption or our numbers, we hope that these adjustments happen in a humane manner, with as little pain as possible to the fewest people possible.

It is absurd that media and politicians are “spinning” this milestone in such positive terms. And, this blinded-sighted view is demoralizing to most senior members of the nation’s scientific community, who understand that increasing human numbers mean increasing resource, social, and political problems for us all!

The title of a recent talk at the National Press Club, “Is Growth the Only Option?” is worth contemplating. The answer depends upon what growth we’re talking about. Obviously, with many life-giving resources already declining, continued population growth is not a rational course, long-term. What about other kinds of growth? Should we continue consumption of resources above their rates of renewal? No, it’s neither viable nor sustainable.

What about growth and expansion of artistic, athletic, and recreational pursuits? Certainly, as long as the resources used for these activities are sustainable – below the rate of regeneration and replacement. What about growth in the depth of connections we humans make with others in our lives and communities – with friends and neighbors? What about more connection with our natural world – walking, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, biking, boating, etc.? What about taking more classes or courses to gain more knowledge and skills? All of these activities and many more are viable and sustainable, especially when they are low-resource-use activities.

It appears that many types of growth that are sustainable will also be highly desirable and life enriching. But growth that is destructive or unsustainable will World Population Balance. Humanely slowing and stopping population growth can help to limit the impact on the environment, preserving it for generations to come. More at World Population Balance dot org.”

Here is an encouraging comment from a supporter: “I acknowledge that every effort in environmental, hunger, AIDS, famine, and other disasters depends upon SUCCESSFUL population reduction or stability…. THANK YOU FOR YOUR INDEFATIGABLE EFFORT.”

U.S. Reaching 300 Million

H ave you thought about joining World Population Balance but have not yet sent in your membership? Your generous gift will be matched, dollar for dollar, by The World Population Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation. They have offered us a very special, Challenge Grant that will match donations only from first-time contributors.

Right now your generosity is vitally important as we seek more funds to expand our educational outreach and our great radio announcements. If you have been thinking about joining, you can help us immensely and double your support by sending your check today. Thank you.

New Members Can Double Their Donation
She Has Her Priorities Right

Recently I called a long-time supporter and friend. Twice during the past decade she arranged for me to speak during her church’s Lenten Lecture Series. She still maintains a vigorous schedule as she approaches her 95th birthday. After we chatted about population events in the news, she mentioned that she had been thinking about the importance of the population issue and about her charitable giving.

She then surprised me with the following comment: “I realize that all our other problems are being intensified by increasing population, especially pressures on environment and resources. Though I don’t have much to give, I’ve been supporting about twenty non-profits a year. However, I’ve just sent all of them a letter commending them for their very good and important work but letting them know that I have decided to focus my giving on the population stabilization issue, since it is the key.”

How tremendously touched and gratified I am that she clearly understands that increasing population is undercutting noble efforts on all our other major issues in the world! Although she wishes to remain anonymous, she also expressed hope that her action would inspire others to focus their giving on the basic issue of population stabilization.

I appreciate her generosity very much. And I am deeply touched and inspired by her understanding, passion, and concern about the paramount position of our great cause: humane population stabilization – for the benefit of everyone on the planet.

And by the way, she’s also hoping to arrange an invitation for me to speak again at her church.

Are We Heading for “Collapse”? 

In his book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, Jared Diamond, a world-renowned evolutionary biologist and biogeographer, has given us guidelines for attaining a sustainable future. His documentation of societies that have succeeded or failed provides us with a historical perspective that is very compelling. What do sustainable societies have in common? What do collapsed or non-sustainable societies have in common? How do we apply this analysis to our present situation? These are the key questions that are raised in Collapse.

Successful or sustainable societies discussed in the book have several qualities in common, including stabilizing population and using their resources wisely. Among the successful societies discussed in the book are Tokugawa (shogunate) Japan and the New Guinea Highlands. Other societies failed by misusing and ultimately depleting their resources. Examples of failed or collapsed societies include Norse Greenland, the Mayans, the Anasazi, the Easter Islanders, and the modern African country of Rwanda.

One of the successful societies covered is Tokugawa-ruled Japan, where most of the homes and buildings were made from timber. Due to burgeoning population growth in the 1600s, Japan’s timber consumption soared. By 1650 major deforestation had taken place, resulting in major soil erosion, flooding, and silting. The looming disaster was averted by achieving a stable population and sustainable consumption rates. This shift toward sustainability in Japan continued: Between 1721 and 1828 their population grew from 26 million to just over 27 million – almost zero population growth.

An example of a society that failed is the Norse settlement in Greenland, which was beset with problems from the beginning. They brought an agrarian economy that had worked well in Norway and Iceland but encountered severe difficulties in Greenland. They destroyed the natural vegetation, which led to soil erosion. They burned woodlands to clear land for pastures and cut most of the remaining timber for lumber and firewood. Their pigs also destroyed valuable vegetation and topsoil.

Without adequate topsoil for agriculture, wood for fuel, and the production of iron for tools, the Norse settlements were headed for collapse. In addition, they failed to learn from the native Inuit people, who had lived in a sustainable relationship with their environment for millennia. All these bad choices led to the collapse of the Norse settlement by the 14th century. ....

(Review to be concluded in next issue.)

Ed Levering is a naturalist, ecologist, and long-time population educator in Minnesota and Colorado.

Balanced View is a publication of World Population Balance

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Our Mission

World Population Balance is committed to educating the general public, policymakers, and the media about current population facts and trends, the consequences of population growth, and the benefits of stabilization. We are a non-profit organization and deliver our message through public presentations and conferences, radio messages, appointments with elected officials, written articles, our newsletter, and our web site.

Current Population

World: 6,550,032,068 July ’06
U.S.: 299,966,102 October ’06

From U.S. Census data
Reflections on Earth Day 2006
by Karen Shragg (See article, page 4.)

by approximately 3 million people a year, increasing faster than all other industrial countries combined. We are increasing faster than all other countries except India and China!

Where are the new soils coming from required to grow more food?
Where are the new sources of water coming from to supply even the basic needs of people? The answer should be obvious; there are no new sources of these limited resources. So we develop our parks, cut down our trees, and pollute our waters in order to accommodate more and more of us — a two-legged specie with an insatiable appetite for limited resources.

On some level I believe many are aware of this issue but fear its implications. They know we can’t keep draining the life out of our planet, keep melting its icecaps and cutting its forests. But we keep doing it because we are in a collective denial that there can possibly be too much of us. We are so wonderful. We are such intelligent people and believe that we are set apart from the other animals and therefore somehow get a pass as to how many resources we get to consume.

Any critical thinker — anyone who crunches numbers — must be able to see that our growth is harming not only the planet but harming us as well. Yes, we can distribute resources more fairly. But we are fundamentally consuming ourselves out of house and home by our habits and our numbers.

Technology cannot solve this one. Only when we accept this undeniable fact can we stop polishing the deck on the Titanic and get down to the business of real and socially responsible solutions to problems that affect all of us in some ways and effect some poor countries in even larger ways. We had better hurry. In the time it took me to write this, 4,230 people were added to the planet. And by the time we all go to sleep tomorrow 200,000 will have been added, net gain.

So I hope you had a great Earth Day weekend. Anything you can do will make a difference. I was fortunate to be able to install a rain barrel, help with a park cleanup, distribute hundreds of trees, and talk to a golf course group about conservation. But the best contribution I think I made was to accept an invitation to go on to the Advisory Board of World Population Balance.

Check them out at <www.world-populationbalance.org>. You will learn facts like: . . . every time anyone spends an American dollar, the energy equivalent of half a liter of oil is burned to produce what that dollar buys! . . . the 5% of the world’s population that lives in the U.S. has more environmental impact than the 51% that live in the other five most populous countries.

So Happy Earth Day. Let’s be sure to insist that every environmental group include the population issue in the framing of their issue.

Thank you.

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World Population Balance
Contribution, Membership, and Change of Address Form

Please detach and return this form with your tax-deductible contribution to our address on the back page.

If there are mistakes in your name and address on the back of this form, please make corrections. Also, please add phone(s) and e-mail address(es). Thank you.

Sign up your friends or relatives for a free year’s subscription!

Thank you.

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We welcome your contribution at any level.

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October 2006 – Page 3
For years evidence has been mounting that documents major climate changes happening at all corners of the planet. In September of 2004 National Geographic devoted a whopping 73 pages to their cover feature entitled *Global Warning*. Here is National Geographic’s list of changes we are already experiencing:

- mercury climbs
- carbon dioxide levels rise
- oceans warm
- glaciers melt
- sea level rises
- sea ice thins
- permafrost thaws
- wildfires increase
- lakes shrink
- lakes freeze up later
- ice shelves collapse
- droughts linger
- precipitation increases
- mountain streams run dry
- winter loses its bite
- Spring arrives earlier
- Autumn comes later
- plants flower sooner
- migration times vary
- habitats change
- birds nest earlier
- diseases spread
- coral reefs bleach
- snowpacks decline
- exotic species invade
- amphibians disappear
- coastlines erode
- cloud forests dry
- temperatures spike at high latitudes.

Now a movie and companion book present similar compelling information to an even broader public. *An Inconvenient Truth* premiered in theaters in June. It is based on a presentation former Vice President Gore prepared when he was a Tennessee Senator.

*An Inconvenient Truth* has received significant attention, including a magazine cover story that stated “The surprise isn’t that the movie is preaching to the converted – it’s that the converted are everywhere from Greenville, SC, where the movie was averaging a strong $7,300 in ticket sales per screen even in its 2nd week of release, to Minneapolis, where it was averaging $7,600 per screen after a month. Even evangelicals, never a big part of Gore’s base, have been rallying behind the cause, such as the 86 pastors – including best-selling Christian author & Saddleback Church founder Rick Warren – who signed a petition of concern about global warming after the picture debuted at Sundance [Film Festival].”

Like the movie, the book is filled with jaw-dropping visuals and graphics that depict the changes in recent years of many glaciers and ice shelves around the world. In addition it details the increases in human activity that are driving up CO2 levels to alarming heights.

One of the most compelling charts shows 650,000 years of CO2 data from the ice cores of Antarctica. It states: “At no point in the last 650,000 years before the preindustrial era did the CO2 concentration go above 300 parts per million.” (It’s now around 350 ppm and rising!)

First mention of population comes on the first page of the Introduction where Gore states “The relationship between human civilization and the Earth has been utterly transformed by a combination of factors, including the population explosion, the technological revolution, and a willingness to ignore the future consequences of our present actions.”

The population stabilization issue receives prominent coverage later in the book, as well. No matter what your politics or scientific background, *An Inconvenient Truth* documents compelling information that is of vital importance to all humankind.

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**Global Climate Change**

**Shragg Joins Board**

We are delighted that environmentalist, naturalist, and author Karen Shragg has joined our Board of Advisors. We have been inspired for many years by Karen’s incorporation of population education into all her teaching as a naturalist and environmental educator. Thanks to Karen’s wisdom, thousands of children have learned that increasing human numbers on this finite planet is a major driver in habitat reduction and species loss.

After Earth Day, Karen sent the letter shown on page 3 to many friends. We were heartened by her thoughts and grateful for her strong endorsement.

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