Many of you – World Population Balance members and supporters – who have studied the overpopulation issue are concerned about the alarming depletion of resources, species loss, and increasing dire poverty that overpopulation is driving all across the planet. You realize that until the overpopulation driver is stopped, all other actions – no matter how well-intentioned – will ultimately be futile.

We’re now at over 7 billion, when increasing numbers of experts from a growing number of professional disciplines tell us a truly sustainable human population range is probably between 1 and 3 billion. Given that the world is vastly overpopulated, the only thing that will return our population to a 2 billion range is to actually reduce our numbers.

There are two ways population can decline. One way is to take no action so that nature inhumanely does it – through more famines, resource wars, droughts, misery, suffering and early deaths. No compassionate person wants to see that.

The other way is to take the necessary action to reduce human population humanely. And there is only one way to do that: dramatically reducing births so that total numbers drift back down to a truly sustainable level.

Obviously, this humane approach has its challenges. It means “business as usual” would have to change. It would necessitate making some sacrifices from the ways we are currently doing many things.

But it is critically important to keep in mind that our alternative is the Inhumane solution – more misery, suffering and early deaths – and on a massively unprecedented scale.

We are excited to announce our new, grassroots initiative to help humanity change course away from the cliff of overpopulation collapse – our Sustainable Population Pledge. We believe our Pledge is the most viable, effective action to help humanity create a truly sustainable future. It is important to notice that we have deliberately worded the Pledge so that every person on the planet is eligible to endorse it – everyone!

The Pledge

Recognizing that the world is in a crisis of 7+ billion people stripping the earth of vital resources, exacerbating dire poverty, misery and early deaths, and pushing many species to extinction:

We are promoting this Pledge worldwide and plan to translate it into several languages. People from other countries are already signing and promoting it.

Be part of the movement. Sign at: worldpopulationbalance.org/content/sustainable-population-pledge
Our Unique Message
Over the years people have frequently asked, “How is World Population Balance different from other population groups?”
Our fundamental message has evolved significantly since our beginnings in the early 1990s. To our knowledge, World Population Balance is the only national population group that is clearly stating all of the following:

1. The world and nation are currently far overpopulated.
2. Truly sustainable population is probably about 2 billion people (150 million in the U.S.).
3. Overpopulation is Solvable. And we can solve overpopulation — humanely.
4. We can reduce population to 2 billion people by dramatically reducing births. By following the lead of countries like Thailand, Iran, Brazil, and others, we could reduce total population by 2100, instead of seeing it rise to 10 or 11 billion.

With global average fertility at 1.5 children per couple — Thailand’s current level — total population in 2100, less than 90 years from now, would be between 4 and 5 billion instead of going to the UN’s predicted 11 billion. That’s a whopping 6 billion fewer people putting stress on an already overstressed planet.

And, even more helpful, if we reduced our average global fertility to 1 child per couple, total population in 2100 would already be close to 2 billion. Although exponential population growth is driving many overwhelming problems on the planet, humanity can reap the benefits of rapid, exponential population decline by dramatically reducing birth rates. One child families can save humanity.

I am convinced that getting there — to a sustainable population range of 2 billion — needs to start with all of us concerned about overpopulation claiming the hope that Overpopulation is Solvable.

I have no illusions. I know it will not come easily or soon. It will take a massive, grassroots, groundswell of effort. But it is possible. It is a possibility. I take encouragement from the great leaders, visionaries of the past — people like Mandela, King, Gandhi, and many others. In the face of obstacles, fatalism, and hopelessness, they stood in possibility. They remained inspired and inspired millions of others. We must move forward doing the very same thing. I am saying: there is a way to humanely reduce human numbers to a truly sustainable range on the planet. There is a way.

We — all 7+ billion of us — have a chance. And, I am inspired that we must take it!

David Paxson, Founder and President

Dick Smith Joining WPB Advisory Board
We are delighted to welcome Australian businessman and overpopulation activist, Dick Smith, to our Board of Advisors. Dick has worked tirelessly in his native Australia to educate his nation about the need for sustainable population. He’s produced an informative and inspiring documentary, Dick Smith’s Population Puzzle, and an insightful book, Dick Smith’s Population Crisis.

Dick is so alarmed about the overpopulation crisis that he’s offering a $1,000,000 prize — patterned after the Nobel Prizes — to an overpopulation activist under the age of 30 who can achieve widespread media coverage for the message that we must find sustainable alternatives to constant population and economic growth. We’re thrilled to have Dick as our newest Advisory Board member.

Fruitful and Multiplying – Major Art Exhibition

The first in the world (to our knowledge) art exhibit on overpopulation runs from April 11th to May 30th at the Bloomington Center for the Arts in Minnesota’s Twin Cities.

Fruitful and Multiplying: The Overpopulation Exhibit is the brainchild of curator, John Schuerman, who has long been dismayed that overpopulation is not a part of popular discourse. He hopes Fruitful and Multiplying will accelerate the overpopulation conversation using a right–brain approach. John is an artist, professional curator, and manager of Instinct Gallery in Minneapolis. He is bringing together seventeen artists who are directly addressing overpopulation through their works.

We at World Population Balance are partnering with John by having two informational exhibits in the show as well as hosting Hollywood actress, Alexandra Paul, who will give her TED–style talk April 28th.

Please join us at both the exhibit and Alexandra’s talk April 28th.

And, we appreciate your help promoting these great overpopulation events to all your friends, as well.
**Why a Sustainable Population Pledge?**

A TWO child average will not solve overpopulation.

- With a two child average per woman (or per man), total population would go up by about two billion more before it even levels off! We must begin dramatically reducing births now – in order to achieve sustainable population and a viable planet for all.

One child families can humanely solve overpopulation!

- By averaging one child, total world population would decline by 2055 by one billion people – back to six billion. And by 2080, population would be below 3.5 billion – cutting our total human consumption in half from its current levels. Exponential population decline can help humanity return to a truly sustainable number of people on the planet.

**One child families can save the world.**

Overpopulation is destroying our planet and our future.

- **We are in a Human Well-being Crisis.** Every year 75 million more acres of farmland are destroyed and lost to farming, net loss – every year (UN). Over half the world’s 7 billion people are in countries where fresh water tables are falling.

- We are destroying / losing 25 more acres of forest every minute, net loss (UNFAO). We are killing off 150 to 200 species every 24 hours (UNEP). Extinction rates are hundreds of times higher than normal.

- Overconsumption of many “renewable” resources is rendering them non-renewable. Alarmingy, we are consuming many non-renewable resources – fossil fuels, metals and minerals – at ever-increasing rates.

- **We are struggling to live healthy lives on a dying planet.** And many people are deluding themselves into believing that we can grow our way out of these problems.

- According to research by the Global Footprint Network and other research organizations, we humans are currently consuming renewable resources over 50% faster than the truly sustainable rate. We are in consumption overshoot. And these calculations do not allocate any of Earth’s habitat for wildlife. Instead, they allocate all Earth’s resources for human use.

- To stop global overconsumption, depletion of resources, and unprecedented loss of species – and significantly reduce dire human poverty – total world population needs to be between one and three billion people. That is the population range to be truly sustainable, long term, on the planet.

- Therefore, the most important single action each of us can do to help create a truly sustainable planet and population is to voluntarily choose to have one child and encourage others to have one child. (See the five minute film, One Planet, One Child at www.worldpopulationbalance.org/content/one-planet-onechild.)

**We can solve overpopulation humanely.**

**Donate Your Vehicle**

Turn your unwanted vehicle, running or not, into a tax-deductible contribution to World Population Balance! In a cooperative effort between World Population Balance and Donation Line, your vehicle can be donated to our organization. And you receive a tax deduction from World Population Balance!

In addition to cars, you can donate trucks, vans, boats, motorcycles, even airplanes. Free towing. No hassle. Pick up ASAP. Go to donate on the WPB website or call 1–877–CARS–4–US, ext. 2255.

**Promote Our Sustainable Population Pledge**

Your help in promoting the Sustainable Population Pledge is absolutely vital. Our goal is to create a new social awareness that one–child families are vitally necessary to achieve a truly sustainable population and planet. Help us promote this awareness to your circle of friends.

Here are several things you can do to help this crucial effort succeed:

1) **Sign the Pledge.** Go to www.worldpopulationbalance.org/content/sustainable-population-pledge
2) **Encourage all your friends and family to join you in signing the Pledge.**
3) **Promote the Pledge** at your place of worship and other groups to which you belong. Help them understand that (a) we’re overpopulated, (b) overpopulation is driving destruction on many fronts, and (c) we can humanely reduce population to a sustainable range.

To help educate them, download a PDF of the Pledge and background information on the Pledge web page. Remember, face-to-face requests with people will be the most successful.

Of course, some people will choose not to sign the Pledge. Others do not yet believe that we are overpopulated. Some still want to have more than one child. And some have any of a host of other reasons why they choose not to sign such a Pledge at this time.

We need to be patient. As the days pass, many of those who don’t yet understand will begin to get it, and eventually some will then choose to join us.

**The Great News —** There are millions of people who understand that we are overpopulated and in a crisis. We need to focus our energies on finding and inviting them to join us at our “Pledge party.”

If you would like our help promoting the Pledge, please call us at 612-869-1640. Let’s solve overpopulation!
Debunking the Top 4 Myths About the State of Our World

By Karen I. Shragg

Whenever I give a talk about the overpopulation crisis we are facing, I try to dispel the many myths that are so commonly held by society today. These myths keep us from working on overpopulation – the core issue causing so many of our problems. These firmly held beliefs are shared by many of our most informed leaders and keep us focused on issues that do not make the world better in the long run.

There are two reasons that the myths listed below make matters worse:

First, they are distractions. They lead people to believe their actions will make a difference in the long run.

Second, they often lead to an increase in births, because they improve people’s lives without dealing with the overpopulation issue. This inevitably means more will suffer when resources hit rock bottom.

THE TOP FOUR MYTHS

1) The Myth that it’s all about consumption.

For a long time environmental messaging has focused on individual behavior. Books like 50 ways to Save the Earth have sold millions of copies. The main message is for each of us to change our consumption behavior. In the context of overpopulation, however, that won’t work.

According to World Watch Institute, a surge in human numbers (forecasted at a 41% increase IF we don’t change course) threatens to offset any savings in resource use from improved efficiency, as well as any gains in reducing per-capita consumption.

A 2009 study from Oregon State University determined that the “carbon legacy” of just one American child will produce 20 times more greenhouse gas than a person will save by doing all of the following: driving a high-mileage car fewer miles, recycling, and using energy-efficient windows, appliances and light bulbs. The study concludes, “Clearly, the potential savings from reduced reproduction are huge compared to the savings that can be achieved by changes in lifestyle.”

2) The Myth that technology is just waiting in the wings to fix everything.

Technological advances only temporarily hold off suffering – often just long enough to encourage more population growth and therefore more suffering in the future. Much of recent technological advance has been purely in the realm of information and communication. In the more fundamental areas of food and energy we have seen no game-changing innovations for decades. Dreams of flying cars and underwater cities have given way to the realities of ongoing depletion and degradation of finite resources.

3) The Myth that it’s all about women’s empowerment.

Having access to birth control is part of the solution, but it is not the whole answer. While it’s true that women need to be given choices and the means to regulate their own family size, they also need positive incentives to have small families. Providing choice without also changing couples’ desired family size will not solve overpopulation. Women and men need to understand the importance of dramatically reducing birth rates so that total human numbers can decline from today’s wholly unsustainable 7 billion to a much more sustainable 2 billion. Both Thailand and Iran have had success reducing family size by making access to birth control a priority in the context of a nationwide campaign to keep families small. These countries had the foresight to put policies in place that will help avoid many of the problems that are associated with overpopulation.

4) The Myth that it’s hopeless so let’s just work on other things.

Overpopulation is solvable. It is easier to significantly reduce births than it is to reduce per capita consumption. In spite of environmental messaging since the first Earth Day in 1970 to reduce our consumption, it continues to rise.

We can humanely solve overpopulation. Countries as diverse as Iran, Thailand, and Mexico have dramatically reduced their birth rates, and many other countries throughout Europe and Asia are lowering their birth rates. The truth is that many of the dreams of everyone – from wide-eyed techno-optimists to human rights advocates and environmentalists – will come to naught without addressing our wholly unsustainable human numbers.

What can each of us do to work on this issue? Help dispel these myths! Demand that those who are in the business of keeping our planet livable understand that it can’t be done without solving overpopulation.

Dr. Karen I. Shragg, an Advisory Board Member of World Population Balance, is Director of Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield, MN.

Al Bartlett – In Memoriam

Long-time Advisory Board member and mentor, Al Bartlett, passed away in September at age 90 in his hometown of Boulder, Colorado. In addition to a long and distinguished career at the University of Colorado as a Professor of Physics, he has been one of the nation’s most influential population educators.

He delivered his lecture, Arithmetic, Population, and Energy: Sustainability 101 over 1,700 times in all 50 states and 8 countries. The YouTube video of this lecture titled The Most Important Video You’ll Ever See has been viewed millions of times!

Al worked tirelessly to educate the world that even small annual percentage gains in population lead to huge exponential growth over time. He understood human overpopulation as the single greatest challenge facing humanity.

Thank you, Al, for all your noble work. You are sorely missed.
Weisman Speaks the Overpopulation Truth in Countdown

Alan Weisman, best-selling author of *The World Without Us*, states it simply: “The Earth can’t sustain our current numbers, and inevitably, one way or another, those numbers must come down.”

In his new book, *Countdown: Our Last Best Hope For A Future On Earth?*, Weisman surveys the huge challenges facing us on this overpopulated planet. Traveling to over 20 countries and interviewing a multitude of experts for two years, Weisman comes to the conclusion that we have much to be concerned about.

Weisman writes:

“Our numbers have reached a point where we’ve essentially redefined the concept of original sin. From the instant we’re born, even the humblest among us compounds the world’s mounting problems by needing food, firewood, and a roof, for starters. Literally and figuratively, we’re all exhaling CO₂ and pushing other species over the edge.”

“Every species in the history of biology that outgrows its resource base suffers a population crash — a crash sometimes fatal to the entire species… Inevitably — and, we must hope, humanely and nonviolently — we must gradually bring our numbers down. The alternative is letting nature do that for us.”

Weisman quotes a former chief economist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture who says: “We’re going to have to produce more food in the next 40 years than we have the last 10,000… Some people say we’ll just add more land or more water. But we’re not going to do much of either.”

Weisman has been interviewed in the past few months by dozens of major media outlets. Following are excerpts:

**On consumption and population:**

NPR’s Ira Flatow: Isn’t lowering consumption just as important as lowering population?

WEISMAN: Ira, have you ever found a condom for consumption? I absolutely commend all efforts to get people to consume less, but it’s really hard. We’re all born into addiction to consume. Take electricity. We use it constantly. You and I are using it right this minute, and it’s going to be very hard to cut back until we have really mature renewable energy systems that can replace fossil fuels, which seems to be a long way off. And it’s been shown now that even if we know how to build them all on a massive scale, they will be very carbon intensive for the first few decades because of mining the materials to build them. So the best thing I can think of that we could do that will have an effect much sooner is to reduce the number of people.

And here are some excerpts from an interview conducted by German independent journalist, Heiko Urbanzyk.

**On understanding total resource consumption:**

It’s like understanding the area of a rectangle. To know how big a rectangle is, you have to multiply the width by the length. So, the width in this case is the amount of energy and resources that the human race demands. The length is the number of those who are doing the demanding. You increase either one of those and the rectangle gets bigger. In this case, the rectangle is our impact on the world. But the world itself does not get bigger. So population has to come down all over the world — in rich countries and in poor countries — if we’re going to be sustainable.

Our population quadrupled in the 20th century. That’s completely unnatural. For you and me it feels natural because we were born in the middle of that. But it isn’t, and nature isn’t going to let it continue.

*Weisman: Continued on Page 7*
This is a geophysical constraint and cannot be avoided. Civilization and our cheap-energy lifestyle are on the verge of collapse. The longer we deny the situation and try to perpetuate the party, the more severe will be the crash and the fewer will be our options.

As soon as the economy begins to revive a little bit, the increased demand drives the price of oil up until the declining, remaining wealth cannot support the more marginal, more expensive sources. Fewer, poorer customers result in fewer, more desperate suppliers – the only ones who can still produce relatively cheap oil. The end result is the beginning of the second half of the 200 year oil age. The first half (hardly more than one lifetime) was typified by growth, prosperity, and increased population. The second half will be the opposite unless we recognize the enormity of our predicament.

The increasing scarcity of cheap, ubiquitous energy can no longer provide freedom from want for everyone. Finite, natural limits cannot supply enough food and fuel for an ever-increasing population. This dilemma is common in the third world and is steadily creeping up the income ladder into our wealthy industrialized society. This is exactly why we have a few very wealthy rising above a shrinking middle class, in turn, absorbed by a rising tide of the poor.

Without cheap energy we can no longer be hyper-consuming Americans. Those who still have the financial means can outbid those who do not. The wealthy naturally resist policies intended to share this wealth. At the same time, the total number of consumers continues to increase while job growth has stagnated. The result is soaring national (and individual) debt with no chance of satisfying entitlements without the necessary economic growth.

To date, neither political party in the United States will admit to permanent energy contraction. The **conservative right** promises renewed growth through decreased taxation on business, new innovation, and new investment. The **liberal left** strives to redistribute waning wealth and the ability to purchase energy to the steadily increasing masses that are moving closer to missing the basic necessities. Both sides advocate increased exploration, efficiency of use, and technical progress. Both sides ignore the geophysical limitations of the short fossil energy age.

The right promises renewed growth from fossil fuels previously off-limits in parks, federal lands, or off-shore preserves. The left defers to reduced consumption, infrastructure repairs, and renewable alternatives as the answers. Either direction leads to the conflict between a stalled-out economy dependent on continued growth, and a growing populace – all needing employment, food, social services, and long-term entitlements.

**There still may be hope for a downsized modern lifestyle, but only if we admit to the seriousness of our terminal illness and not be lulled by bogus panaceas and political promises necessary for election.** Most Americans refuse to accept the certainty that traditional norms are quickly changing. The public is absolutely imbedded in a lifestyle that is dependent on continued growth, extensive travel, and ubiquitous cheap energy.

Accurate education may be the most difficult challenge of all. It will require both an orderly reduction in per-capita energy usage plus a birth decline at the level of 1 child per male (or per female) to have any hope of reaching a renewable, sustainable, low-energy future.

The only possible way to achieve 1 child per male/female in a modern free society is with vast publicity and peer pressure. The public must realize that any children born today will not only compete with everyone else for resources, but their parents will still be there to see them suffer in a world that will become a whole lot uglier.

We are clearly at a tipping point. In the last eighty years (one lifetime) we have consumed approximately one-half of the world’s conventional and non-conventional oil. In the same period we have used a large percentage of high-

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**John Howe** is a retired engineer, author, speaker, life-long farmer, and solar-energy activist in Waterford, Maine. The article contains edited excerpts from his book: The End of Fossil Energy (4th ed.): What Next? It’s Up To You. To order a surface-mail book or free complete PDF, contact David Paxson at 612-869-1640 or paxson@worldpopulationbalance.org.
Weisman: Continued from Page 5

On pro-growth economists:
You have pro-growth economists who are always saying that the measure of the health of the economy is whether it’s growing. Pro-growth economists always like large populations, because that makes labor cheaper. They like it when poor people are competing against each other, and they will work for less and less money. It’s a way of squeezing and exploiting poor people. In the future, they fear that when there are fewer people, wages are going to have to remain high because of the demand for workers.

Fewer people will make for a better and fairer world. Right now we have a few rich people with most of the money in the world. And that is destabilizing.

On his worst experience while writing Countdown:
Pakistan. Seeing a country that is so out of control. It’s crazy! By the middle of the century they may have more people than the United States—nearly 400 million people. But the country is only the size of Texas, which only has 26 million. It’s totally out of control!

I wanted to interview two guys who were trying to help save the mangrove forests. But just before my interview their bodies were found tortured and dead floating in the harbor. People who wanted to cut the mangrove forests killed them.

This is a country that is a nuclear power! And it’s filled with frustrated, angry young men because they are unemployed or underemployed. The economy can’t possibly employ so many people. That is the worst possible case of overpopulation—and that’s what I don’t want the world to turn into.

On positive news in the Philippines:
Fishing villages are taking family planning into their own hands because it’s logical. The fishermen suddenly realized that they cannot become so numerous that they overwhelm the fish stocks. They have seen over the past few decades that it’s harder to catch fish because there are so many fishermen. So, now someone comes and offers them contraceptives and everybody wants to take them. Because if you only have two sons who will be fishermen, that is much better than having four or five of them. The families used to average between eight and nine. Now they are averaging two. We can do this without waiting for the governments to do it for us.

On how countries have brought down birth rates:
In Mexico they did it with soap-opera television programs—so called Telenovelas. They showed that small families do better than large families. In Thailand they did it with humor. They made it fun to use condoms. They made it economically sensible. Health economist Mechai Viravaidya started that program. He told poor villagers that they would always remain poor if they kept having too many children. Each family and each village could be better off having fewer children.

On his most beautiful experience while writing Countdown:
To see in Iran how they turned around. Iran had the highest population growth in human history when they were trying to build a 20 million man army to fight Iraq. They asked every Iranian woman who could get pregnant to get pregnant and do her patriotic duty. And then they turned it around so fast when they realized that they would turn into Pakistan, too. This shows that we can do this! That’s a beautiful moment for me.

Alan Weisman was born in 1947 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was a Professor for International Journalism at the University of Arizona. As a journalist he contributes to The New York Times, Harper’s Magazine, The Los Angeles Times Magazine, and others. Weisman is also a producer of radio documentaries for Homelands Productions.
Modern civilization is poised at the most serious turning point ever in the history of mankind. Finite fossil energy has fueled an unprecedented short epoch of growth and prosperity that can only be a one-shot occurrence. For tens of thousands of years, our ancestors barely survived by accessing slightly more energy in the form of nearby food than the personal energy required for the effort. Subsequent harnessing of wood, wind, water, draft animals, and slaves provided an additional small surplus and the beginning of modern history.

Just a little over two centuries ago, when the concentrated energy of coal was first harnessed for mechanical work, the industrial age began. The resultant labor-saving power for manufacturing and transport made it possible to settle new lands and exploit additional food availability.

Unprecedented growth, prosperity, and modern medicine expanded worldwide in spite of two world wars, which were fought for and decided by cheap oil. Because of a trillion barrels of oil – and mechanized agriculture and modern medicine – population exploded fourfold in the last 80 years – just one lifetime.

We are faced with the reality that oil is finite. And the world extraction rate of conventional oil can no longer keep pace with population growth. It absolutely peaked at just over 75 million barrels per day and has remained at this plateau since 2005. Non-conventional liquid fuels have increased, but their energy, economic, and environmental costs are much higher. Meanwhile, world population continues to increase inexorably as multitudes of new consumers born near the peak of the oil age far exceed the elderly, born four generations earlier.

We live in an economic system entirely dependent on growth. Our prosperity needs the promise of a future return of principal PLUS interest to justify the investment of present principal. This worked well for the last one hundred years, as long as there was always an excess of cheap pre-stored fossil energy available to “fuel” the growth. Prosperity, food to feed a growing population, an oil-based transportation system, and new construction all require massive amounts of fossil energy, and this cheap and abundant energy is going into terminal decline.

Howe: Continued on Page 6