

NPG Releases Landmark Report on Colorado's Population Crisis

Colorado is quickly losing its foothold at the forefront of environmentalism as record population growth overwhelms its infrastructure, finds a new NPG report.

At 4.3 million residents, Colorado is the third-fastest growing state in the country. During the 1990s, Colorado added over one million inhabitants, or about 275 people each day, growing by almost one-third. Its open space is vanishing, its highways are clogged with polluting traffic jams, and every hour, ten acres of its farmland and open space are lost to development. Residents now rank growth as the state's number one problem.

NPG's report "Colorado's Population in 2050" explores how population pressures are overwhelming Colorado's schools, parks, and highways. It points out that, while growth issues have dominated Colorado's media for the past few years, debate has been focused on sprawl and "smart growth" rather than on the root cause of the problem: a constantly increasing population.

NPG commissioned a poll of registered likely voters in Colorado and found that by wide margins, Colorado voters see a



deterioration in their quality of life because of overpopulation and don't believe "smart growth" alone can solve the problem. More than two-thirds say overpopulation is a major problem in Colorado, and 72 percent say that population growth is an outright threat to the quality of life in Colorado. Sixty-one percent want the federal

government to lower immigration levels, and 70 percent say that state and federal leaders have a responsibility to halt population growth so that a high quality of life, a healthy environment, and a sound economy can be maintained.

"We found a striking level of public awareness and concern about population growth," says NPG executive director Sharon McCloe Stein. "Colorado voters understand what their leaders don't: that even the best 'smart growth' plans won't

work if population growth isn't ended."

NPG sent the booklet to Colorado legislators and is urging local activists to discuss results with their representatives. For a copy of "Colorado's Population in 2050: A Road Paved with Good Intentions," contact NPG at 202-667-8950 or via email at npg@npg.org.

U.S. Only Industrialized Country Still Growing

The world will reach 9.3 billion by 2050 (from 6.1 billion currently), show new United Nations Population Division projections.

While most developed countries will stabilize or return to past, smaller sizes, the poorest nations are expected to triple in size. Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia will grow rapidly, and India will surpass China as the world's most populated country. The only major industrialized country that will continue to grow is the United States.

The Census Bureau projects that the U.S. will grow from 283 million today to 400 million by 2050, largely due to immigration. By then, the only industrialized nation in the top ten largest countries will be the U.S.

"The U.S. growth explosion continues because, unlike Europe, we have virtually no practical control of our borders," says NPG president Donald Mann. "Rather than absorbing the excess population of developing countries, we should instead set sensible, lower limits on immigration and work to improve living conditions in the third world, helping them become places people aren't driven to leave."

NPG has requested a meeting with the White House's Office of Domestic Policy to discuss setting a national population policy in relation to our ability to feed, school, and house new people without destroying our environment and quality of life (see page 3).

School Enrollment Ties With Baby Boom High

Students Pay the Price in Overcrowded Classrooms

The 49 million students now enrolled in U.S. elementary and high schools equal the record high set by the baby boomers in 1970, new Census figures show. The enrollment report attributes the 16 percent increase over the last decade to the children of baby boomers and the immigration influx.

Across the nation, schools are struggling to meet the needs of growing student populations. Almost three out of four adolescents attend high schools larger than 1,000 students. In county after county, students must attend classes in portable classrooms and eat lunch in staggered schedules starting as early as 10:30 to ease the strain on crowded cafeterias. In some areas, sports leagues can't find room for all the kids who want to participate. Teachers report that they don't have enough time to assist individual students who need extra help, and too many students are getting lost in the crowd. In Florida, schools are so overcrowded that legislators are considering paying students to go to private schools instead of public ones. In Kansas City, one class meets in what used to be a restroom.

Faced with a rising student population and a shortage of cheap land for new school construction, school districts nationwide are building schools on or near polluted and toxic sites, reports the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice.

At the same time that they are struggling to find more space and teachers, school systems must still meet basic educational challenges, like reducing dropout rates, raising academic achievement levels, and meeting the needs of an increasing share of non-English-speaking students. Yet rather than being used to improve the quality of education for current students, communities' limited tax dollars must instead be diverted to build new schools to accommodate growth.

No relief is in sight: Department of Education officials say that by 2100, the nation's schools will have to find room for 94 million students—nearly double the current number. “It's time that our political leaders acknowledge what parents already know: Our schools, like our highways, our parks, and our energy supply, are suffering from a population crisis,” says NPG communications director Alison Green. 📧



NPG communications director Alison Green discusses overpopulation with Congressman Jim McDermott on Seattle public radio station KUOW's Earth Day program.

NPG in the News

NPG's work was featured in the *Denver Post*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Boulder Daily Camera*, the *Aspen Daily News*, and Palm Beach's *Desert Sun*. NPG's op-eds and letters to the editor appeared in the *Fresno Bee* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, and NPG staffers discussed population issues on radio shows across the country. Additionally, we reached millions of Americans with our full-page ads in the *New Republic*, *Washington Post Weekly*, *Washington Times Weekly*, and *E Magazine*.

VISIT NPG'S NEW WEB SITE

NPG's web site has been revamped with a new look and a more user-friendly structure. Visit us at www.npg.org, where you'll find our library of *Forum* papers, *Footnotes*, and other publications, as well as useful facts and figures, NPG advertisements, state factsheets, and much more.

Inside The White House: Where Does The Administration Stand?

NPG is closely monitoring the new White House's actions on population-related issues. While President Bush has not yet spoken explicitly on population, his early actions



indicate an unfriendliness toward family planning and a potentially short-sighted stance on immigration.

On his second day in office, Bush reinstated the global gag rule, a regulation prohibiting federal aid to groups that offer abortion counseling in developing countries. In April, he proposed ending a requirement that health insurance programs for federal employees cover a range of contraceptives.

Bush opposes a broad amnesty for illegal immigrants, but it's not yet clear how he will respond to Mexican President Vicente Fox's proposals to open the border between the U.S. and Mexico, raise the number of permanent visas allotted to Mexico, and create a new "guest worker" program that would allow hundreds of thousands of Mexican

agricultural workers to live and work in the U.S.

A new joint Mexico-U.S. working group on immigration is expected to consider a guest worker program, as well as cooperation on border law enforcement, and hopes to have initial findings for the two presidents by fall. Any plan emerging from the negotiations to change the legal status of undocumented workers would need to be approved by Congress.

NPG has requested a meeting with the White House domestic policy staff to discuss the need for a national population policy. "With each passing year, it becomes more imperative that we address the problems associated with unlimited population growth, including migration pressures, national security concerns, and quality of life consequences," wrote NPG executive director Sharon McCloe Stein in a letter to the President. "The nation's anti-sprawl, water conservation, and environmental protection priorities cannot be reconciled with the new infrastructure and resource consumption that continued growth will require."

NPG also pressed the White House to rethink a proposal to double the per-child tax credit, pointing out that raising the tax incentives for higher fertility encourages population growth while doing nothing to address the real concerns of American families.

Population Growth at Root of California Power Crisis

NPG called on California Governor Gray Davis to end his silence on the principal cause of the state's energy crisis: California's record population growth. California's population has risen 70 percent since 1970 and 14 percent in the last decade alone.

The problem is not that Californians are particularly wasteful with energy; total energy use per capita has gone down. But the state's ever-growing population—more than 4 million new Californians in the last ten years—has sent overall use up anyway. The only long-term solution is to limit the growth of demand by halting population growth.

"Your office has been silent for too long regarding the catastrophic consequences of allowing population to expand unchecked," wrote NPG executive director Sharon Stein to Governor Davis. "Please do the right thing—tackle California's energy problem at the roots and call for a sound population policy, at both the state and federal levels. Californians deserve the truth about the energy crisis, and they deserve a sensible population policy that we can live with for generations to come."

Experts warn that energy crises could soon affect the rest of the nation, citing the growing population's increased demand for electricity. Legislators say the next energy crisis is likely to hit New York, Chicago, Boston, and the western half of the country.

More than 1 in 3 Will Face Water Shortages in 2025

Forty-eight countries will face water shortages by 2025, according to “Solutions for Water-Short World,” a recent report from the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health’s Population Information Program. More than 2.8 billion people—over 35 percent of the world’s population—will be affected. Population growth alone will be responsible for shortages in 17 of these countries. The report also notes that if calculations were made regionally rather than nationally, parts of China and the U.S. would already be considered to be suffering water stress or water scarcity.

CIA Study: Population Growth is Global Threat

A new report from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) says that by 2015, the world’s population will overwhelm its resources. “Global Trends 2015” predicts that global population growth and resulting resource scarcities will heighten political and social tensions. Some of its findings:

- Population growth will cause global water shortages, particularly in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and northern China, heightening the risk of regional conflict and potentially leading to water wars. Parts of the U.S. will experience water shortages by 2015.
- Water conservation, expanded use of desalinization, developing genetically modified crops that use less water or more saline water, and importing water “will not be sufficient to substantially change the outlook for water shortages in 2015.”
- The number of people living in “mega-cities” with more than 10 million residents will double in the next 15 years.

Population-Driven Agricultural Increases Threaten Environment

Increases in agriculture necessary to feed an increasing world population will pollute the environment, threaten animal species, and destroy forests, says a new report published in the journal *Science*. Natural ecosystems covering an area larger than the U.S. will need to be converted to agriculture by 2050, and the environmental impact may rival that of greenhouse gases, according to the study by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Much of the expansion is expected to occur in less developed rainforest countries. The study also predicts that agricultural run-off will increase water “dead zones” worldwide. Dead zones are aquatic areas incapable of supporting life.

NEW FROM NPG!



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Perspectives on Population

“(California’s) two senators each represent 17 million people. Wyoming’s each represent 250,000 people. When California reaches 50 million (by 2040), its senators will represent 100 times more people than those of Wyoming, which is not growing.”

—columnist

James O. Goldborough, writing in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*

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Population and Resource Outlook is a quarterly publication by Negative Population Growth, a national non-profit membership organization dedicated to educating Americans about the detrimental effects of overpopulation on our environment and quality of life.

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