

# **THE TRUE ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER—THE SILENCE ON OUR GROWING OVERPOPULATION**

**WHERE WE ARE, HOW WE GOT HERE, CAN WE RECOVER AND SAVE OUR NATION AND OUR PLANET?**

**An NPG Forum Paper  
by Michael G. Hanauer**

## **THE PROBLEM OF SCIENTIFIC OVERLOOK AND DENIAL**

Overpopulation is a major problem in virtually every nation and region of the world, in both (over) developed and in developing areas. There is nary an environmental problem that is not impacted by this overarching issue. Population is the universal problem multiplier. Yet, most individuals, environmental organizations, government, as well as the media, are ignoring the big issue of authentic sustainability and its biggest component, overpopulation. The issue of population is less mentioned in the press and by most environmental organizations and activists today than ever before – at least in my lifetime. We are now overpopulated, and it keeps getting worse – yet even mention of the problem has almost disappeared, and even outright denial is becoming common. For this reason, today’s environmental action norm amounts to little more than thoughts and prayers.

As a result, at this point it’s pretty much common knowledge for many of us: We are losing the climate change and virtually all the other (too often ignored) environmental battles. If this isn’t corrected, our future is lost. Period. We who understand must find a way to spread the word and get it oft propagated and repeated. It may be Earth’s only chance. So many clearly now believe our present trajectory needs major adjustment. Silence is not golden.

I have come to believe that some years from now, the world will look back to the climate change and environmental movement and ask: “What were they thinking in excluding authentic sustainability, and its major component, overpopulation, in their programs?” The world then is likely to be much worse off as growth continued, no matter what carbon levels are or what geoengineering has accomplished (and further destroyed). I believe that the climate change and environmental movements may well be seen as having done more harm than good.

As of this writing, the coronavirus pandemic is ravaging wide swaths of the world. Over 100,000 lives

have been lost so far, but even the worst-case scenario will not remove the environmental threat posed by growing overpopulation. World population, currently at 7.6 billion, was projected (before the pandemic) to reach 10 to 11 billion by the end of this century.<sup>1</sup> US population, now at 329 million and projected to reach 404 million by 2060, is of course our own dangerous scenario.<sup>2</sup> Corona or no-corona, global population is already too large to enable environmental sustainability or quality human health conditions.

While our overpopulation will not be reduced quickly, we can stop the population growth relatively quickly. That is most significant. And, looking at the longer term must also be included. If we had given overpopulation its huge due starting 40 years ago, we would not be in this mess today. It is not the only problem, but it is a problem that can’t be ignored.

Growing overpopulation is hindering ever reining in greenhouse gas emissions. Our avoidance of talking about our culture of eternal economic and population growth is already showing itself as a disaster. What is going on, led by major environmental organizations and generally reinforced by the media and all levels of government, is a true disaster for our communities, our nation, and our planet.

We, the overpopulation aware, can remedy this problem. It won’t be quick, but I believe it will happen with organization, leadership, a plan, and endurance.

## **THE TWO OVERARCHING ISSUES SO OFTEN OVERLOOKED**

I believe that if our nation, and likely most nations, is to ever come together in terms of people and the planet, it will be by acknowledging and acting on TWO OVERARCHING ISSUES:

1. Special Interests are controlling our government and the media, which makes it impossible to pass any meaningful legislation. Good government must be able to create strategy for where our society should be heading and plans to get there for the common good of the people, future people, and the planet.

Private companies may fill a role to provide goods and services to fulfill that strategy within the plans.

2. Our culture of looking to (eternal) growth is the SOURCE of most of our problems, NOT the solution. The USA doubles its GDP every 40 years and doubles its population every 70 years (mostly immigration). Growth overwhelms all else we try to do to help the environment and society, and to achieve authentic sustainability. Curbing demand by lowering and ultimately reversing population growth must become part of the mainline strategy.

I have come to believe that virtually every other problem is to a large extent a symptom of these two overarching issues. To me, these two issues should get way more attention than they do – by both individuals and by organizations – scientific experts, government, NGOs, think tanks and the media. Environmental (including climate change) organizations are almost universally ignoring both of these issues. They are fighting only what are mostly symptoms.

The problem of control by special interests is getting some attention, especially in the US with the 2010 Federal Election Commission vs. Citizens United Supreme Court decision, which struck down as unconstitutional a federal law prohibiting corporations and unions from making expenditures in connection with federal elections. We are making progress with many groups (although rarely environmental groups) advocating a constitutional amendment aimed at overturning that decision. Getting a government that represents the commons and can see into the future is crucial.

The problem with our love of eternal (population and economic) growth is almost universally hushed. I believe we need to find a way to fix this if we are to save our communities, our nation, and our planet. Climate change is only one major problem. If we only try to mitigate symptoms like climate change, we still NEVER attain authentic sustainability because, at best, we give the appearance of promoting more growth. No matter how successful (or not) we may be in controlling carbon emissions, we still destroy the environment. That means the oceans cease functioning, the fish are all eaten, the planet's diversity of life disappears with all its habitat, the traffic, sprawl, heaps of trash, and economic inequality still only get worse with always escalating housing prices, clean water becomes ever scarcer, and we still need "franken foods" to feed the growing population. In fact, mitigating only carbon emissions is likely to allow us to further escape sustainability and worsen all the symptoms. Our continuing population and (largely resulting) economic growth overwhelms all else, including carbon emissions and our need for always more energy.

In this paper, I will concentrate on population growth and sustainability over special interest influence because it is my greatest interest and it is most overlooked. I concentrate on population growth over economic growth largely because population growth is

the biggest factor behind economic growth, especially in developed nations who are the biggest contributors to the most critical problems like climate change, ocean pollution, and overfishing.

There are many ways to slow, stop and reverse overpopulation – and most are benign and inexpensive compared to treating all the symptoms. BUT, the first step in solving any problem is to acknowledge the problem and have discussions about it – not to be silent. If people would only realize that it is people driving all those cars, eating all that fish, requiring all that housing, producing all that sprawl, releasing all that carbon and producing all that trash, it would in itself yield great benefits. I believe it would make the difference in saving quality life on Earth.

Are the organizations you are associated with including authentic sustainability and its main component, growing overpopulation, in its programs? Probably not – unless we all put on the pressure.

Highlighting the problem and, based on a good amount of personal activism, suggesting a few thoughts on how we might effectively alter this destructive landscape, is the thrust of this paper.

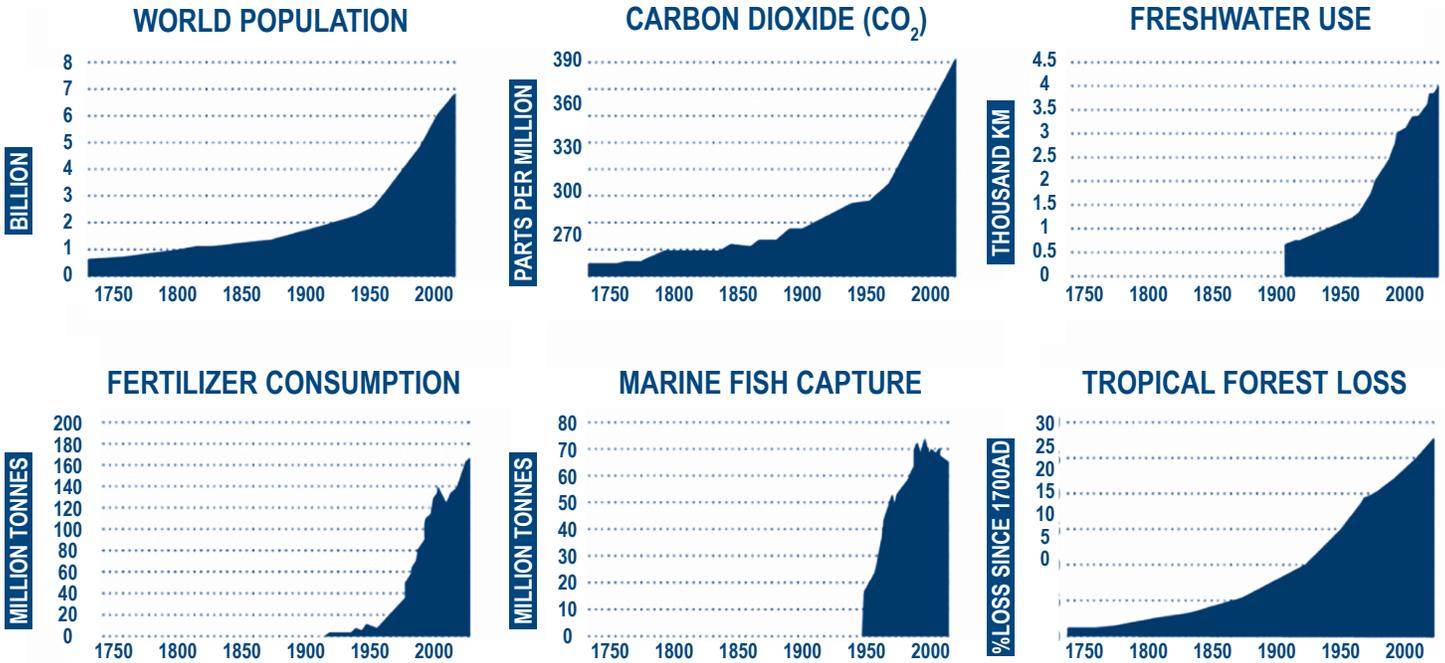
## **SO MANY EXCUSES TO AVOID EVEN MENTIONING OVERPOPULATION**

We have a planetary cancer which continues to get more aggressive, yet our fire before aiming tactic, which generally includes only what are largely symptoms, amounts to treatment with a box of band-aids and no plan or even realistic hope to get where we need to be. A road that goes one-third the distance should not continue to make us feel good while denying the extent of the required journey. We are targeting, even defining, mostly easy and politically correct symptoms – usually avoiding and therefore even masking the most effective, enduring and necessary actions. The more we avoid this subject, the harder it becomes to bring it up and the more damage is done.

Our environmental leadership has failed the Earth and all of its precious life forms. Why? They, almost unanimously, exclude any mention of how the human species, because of its ever growing numbers, is crowding out nature and all of its inhabitants while making for a waste trail that is overwhelming the same. Most know we can't save anything by ignoring our growing overpopulation, yet when shown something like the following two graphics, so many deny with no scientific evidence, change the subject, or rant dangerous excuses.

And because the leaders are in explicit or implicit denial, the environmentally concerned population at large does not appreciate the population connection. Why is this the case?

## HUMAN FOOTPRINT



Graphics from Population Matters, "Mythbusting: Population: A Problem or Not?"<sup>3</sup>

Data source: WWF

At a 30,000 foot level, they just want to avoid the subject. At a more detailed level, excuses often heard include:

### AT A PERSONAL LEVEL

1. Malthus was wrong
2. It is racist to talk about population or immigration
3. Everyone could fit in the state of Texas
4. I see lots of open space from an airplane
5. Who decides which humans stay and which humans go
6. The (over) population problem will solve itself
7. Talking about population locally implies talking about immigration
8. The problem is consumption
9. We can't change how people choose to reproduce
10. Climate change is the big problem, and we can address that without addressing population issues
11. It takes too long to deal with population issues and change trends
12. Overpopulation is code for eugenics
13. I don't see how talking about it helps much. The earth is going to cull us like the collapse of an overpopulated herd of deer
14. The Chinese one-child policy was oppressive
15. The Bible says "go forth and multiply"
16. We need growth, it's vital to our economy; Growth will solve our problems; To not grow is to die
17. We need more people to pay for the elderly population

Having One Fewer Child Will Save 58.6 Tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> Equivalent Per Year	
Tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent per year for one person undertaking each action	
Sustainable Action	Tons of CO <sub>2</sub> Saved
Upgrade light bulbs	0.10
Recycle	0.21
Hang-dry clothes	0.21
Wash clothes in cold water	0.25
Replace typical car with hybrid	0.52
Eat a plant-based diet	0.82
Switch electric car to car free	1.15
Buy green energy	1.47
Avoid one roundtrip transatlantic flight	1.60
Live car free	2.40
<b>Have one fewer child</b>	<b>58.60</b>

*Data from "The four lifestyle choices that most reduce your carbon emissions."<sup>4</sup>*

## **AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL (OFTEN JUST WHISPERED)**

1. It's not important to our central cause and mission
2. That's an issue for the population organizations
3. Population is not a "politically correct" issue or it is a "personal issue"
4. It might upset a few of our members or discourage memberships
5. We might lose revenue
6. It's not critical to how we are judged as successful
7. The time is not right
8. Population stabilization is too tough a goal; it seems so intangible
9. We don't really know enough about population and how it affects our central issues
10. We have never dealt with population issues before
11. Talking about population will imply I am not a team player with respect to my colleagues or other organizations

There is certainly overlap between the two categories (personal and organizational), and organizations use both but often are mostly concerned with the latter.

You could probably add more. Some of these reasons are honest (yet usually invalid) and some are just fabricated excuses to avoid the conversation (and therefore meaningful action). Perhaps most disturbing, most of these "reasons" do not deny the massive impact of the population connection. Rather, they are excuses to avoid talking about this critical overarching issue.

## **A HISTORY OF AVOIDANCE FIFTY YEARS IN THE MAKING**

Attributing population growth to environmental decay has, over the last half century, gone from approachable and important common knowledge to "The Elephant in the Living Room" that so many pretend isn't there.

In 1969, "The Population Bomb" by Paul and Ann Ehrlich became a best seller and the impact of population became a common college course and text subject. The common knowledge of the population connection in the 1960s and 1970s was likely a factor in the US lowering its fertility rate so greatly, an important milestone but not the end of the story. This sentiment and "thought" evolution was echoed by many, if not most, environmental organizations. The subject now is essentially verboten.

Also in 1969, the Sierra Club urged "the people of the United States to abandon population growth as a pattern and goal; to commit themselves to limit the total population of the United States in order to achieve a balance between population and resources; and to achieve a stable population no later than the

year 1990."<sup>5</sup> David Brower, then Sierra Club executive director, noted, "We feel you don't have a conservation policy unless you have a population policy."<sup>6</sup> I can remember the Sierra Club calling the US the most overpopulated nation on Earth (because of impact), an issue they won't even mention today – and now we are at 330 million, up from 203 million in 1969.

At the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, population organizations talked about the population connection freely and many environmental organizations were willing to participate in the dialogue (although too often, still reticent to include programs addressing it). Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, noted later: "The bigger the population gets, the more serious the problems become ... We have to address the population issue. The United Nations, with the U.S. supporting it, took the position in Cairo in 1994 that every country was responsible for stabilizing its own population. It can be done. But in this country, it's phony to say 'I'm for the environment but not for limiting immigration.'"<sup>7</sup>

Birth control and pro-choice advocating organizations also once noted the environmental advantages of their positions. Later, into the 1980s, as immigration became an issue and population concerns became touted as a women's issue rather than a human and environmental issue, these groups too began to remove environmental concerns from their positions.

The often maligned president Richard Nixon (1969-1974) was in many ways an environmental visionary. He signed the Clean Air, Endangered Species, and Clean Water acts (1972, 1973, 1974), all of which set a clear environmental priority and were sparkling examples of legislation to be adopted by states, municipalities and other nations. On both global and US population, he noted "[population is] one of the most serious challenges to human destiny in the last third of this century."<sup>8</sup> In 1969, he backed creating the John Rockefeller Commission on Population and the American Future, which found no need to further increase population. But, with objection from special interests and the Catholic Church, Nixon rejected the Rockefeller Commission findings in 1972. Perhaps this was the beginning of the end for population to be in the public or political dialogue.

Into the 2000s, Global Warming/Climate Change became the dominant environmental issue (ignoring virtually all else). Further, as corporate money and lobbying became more powerful and corporations were always looking for more population and economic growth, the American people became convinced that (eternal) growth would solve our problems. And as conservative religious organizations became stronger, their positions too gained more impact. Organizations that knew better began to support (explicitly or implicitly) the culture of eternal growth.

By 2010, even talk of just *global* population issues became verboten by many organizations, and many abandoned most environmental problems in favor of social justice issues (which also often stem from the impacts of overpopulation!). Seeing a need for authentic sustainability or dealing with or even talking of population issues was literally censored. Groups like the Sierra Club and the National Resources Defense Council have gone so far as to label those believing overpopulation is a problem as racists. Powerful leadership and misguided group think succeeded in setting the stage for a denial of the overpopulation problem, or excuses to bury the issue, as part of any discussion or program.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE GROUPS NOW SAYING (OR NOT SAYING)?

### SIERRA CLUB

Unlike in earlier times, the Sierra Club is now bent on finding excuses to avoid (over)population as a problem or even as a topic of discussion.

I have been a Sierra Club member for many years, but am now considering not renewing. Over the years I have seen them more and more downplay and even deny the implications of population growth (and immigration) while still officially acknowledging its impact.<sup>9</sup> Of some 200 “campaigns” listed on its web site, none are about human population. Further, the Sierra Club is making it almost impossible for anyone disagreeing with the stance to downplay the impacts of overpopulation to gain a seat on its Board of Directors. BoD sanctioned “nominating committee” candidates are highly vetted. To run as a “petition candidate” now has onerous requirements. (There is no provision for write-ins). In the recent past, I have seen no BoD candidate position even mention the impacts of growing human population and my emails to many of them asking about the subject have all been ignored. Their charter as a non-tax exempt 501(c)4 organization allows them to hide the source of contributions and be quite partisan in their support of candidates rather than issues.

From “Why I Don’t Stay Awake at Night Worrying About Population Growth (And neither should you)”<sup>10</sup> By Wendy Beckett, Jan 6, 2020: “Without a doubt, the growing number of people on the planet puts a significant strain on natural resources and the ecosystems that support life. But a careful look at population trends reveals that while the total number of people on the planet is increasing, the rate of population growth is slowing.

“It’s true that the rate of consumption rises along with an increasing population—unless that is, we could figure out how to bring down rates of consumption independently of population. This is very hard to do, so hard in fact, that it can seem easier to focus on reducing population as a way to limit total gross consumption rather than tackling per-capita consumption, an

approach that often involves telling people (usually women) to have fewer children.

“In sum, when we’ve finally broken free of our dependence on fossil fuels; when as a society we’ve figured out a collective value system not driven by the need to relentlessly consume products; and when all women have access to education and reproductive health services, as well as the ability to determine the course of their lives, maybe then I will decide that too many people on the planet is the problem I need to worry about. Until then, I’ve got other work to do.”

As you can see, the Sierra Club does acknowledge the huge impact of overpopulation, but then gives head in the sand excuses to avoid the problem. The fact that it continues to grow into the foreseeable future, that there is so much pro-growth pressure to “eternally expand,” via immigration if necessary, and that the US and the world are well over a sustainable figure now, have become mere “inconvenient truths.”

### 350.ORG

The premier NGO advocating for stopping climate change and carbon emissions quashes virtually all talk on population issues. Founder Bill McKibben, who wrote the book “Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families,” has conveniently forgotten his own insights.

A recent Facebook post by 350.org noting that “A Heathrow third runway ruled illegal over climate change” and “Appeal court says decision to give go-ahead not consistent with Paris agreement”<sup>11</sup> praises the court decision with no use of intelligence on its overpopulation ramifications and the growing conundrum between environment and overpopulation.

### GRIST.ORG

Grist is a news outlet which concentrates on climate change issues and even says they care about sustainability, yet will not own up to the population connection.

In an article prompted by a question from yours truly, “Humans cause climate change. Do we just need fewer humans?”<sup>12</sup> by Eve Andrews on Feb 28, 2019, Grist too admitted the problem and came up with excuses to avoid it.

To start, they note: “The ‘optimal’ global population to sustain ecosystems is considered to be between 1 and 2 billion. The actual population at present is a bit more than 7.5 billion.”

Andrews then follows up with excuses to avoid - topics like who decides who stays and who goes. We know, Andrews knows, Grist knows – it is about numbers and about impact and about education, not coercion. We also know that we don’t *just* need fewer babies, as noted in the byline, and altered from my original question, but that fewer babies is key to saving ourselves and the planet. And as for carbon emissions, it is the overdeveloped nations that must stop growth, and reduce population over time, to make the needed

impact. Reducing consumption in developed nations, unless it is to poverty levels, cannot be enough. (See my previous NPG Forum paper *Overpopulation and Overconsumption* for more on this.)

### STORY OF STUFF (SOS)

SoS notes: “Our first movie, *The Story of Stuff*, started it all, launching an honest conversation about our consumption-crazed culture. Since then, we’ve produced dozens more animated shorts and documentaries that chart a path to a more just and sustainable future.”<sup>13</sup>

When I sent the following reply to an SoS request for donation: “I’m sorry. I have stopped supporting groups that won’t talk about our growing overpopulation. It is the overarching issue and universal multiplier of every other problem. We can’t fix anything while we keep growing and avoid the subject.”

I received the following most interesting reply: “Thanks for your thoughts. Overpopulation is a conversation we definitely have within the team and it’s an important issue. We respect your decision as we believe fighting the good fight comes in different aspects of our movement. Please keep up the great work!”

Wow. SoS knows about it, talks about it, kicks it under the carpet.

### GLOBAL WARMING PROBLEM SOLVERS

From a similar reply to a donation request: “No need to apologize, Mike, for not donating. Most don’t and the few who do won’t if not asked. So I ask everyone, make it easy, on the off chance. Good to hear from you and how you are addressing the problems. Rob” Later: “Population growth due to immigration has no effect on the world population or climate change because it’s a global problem. Tossing all that trash should be illegal and stopped at once. Not left to the next generation to do better. Talk of throwing the baby out with the bath water is not going to change anyone’s behaviors. Not like don’t burn fossil fuels.”

No explanation at first. Does that mean we really don’t care? And the later part: My response, “70 Million more Americans in 40 years and you deny the impact or refuse even to acknowledge it! I find that so sad. Have you ever taken a Systems Engineering Course? An American, even a European, emits way more carbon. You know that. I believe calling something a global problem is a copout. There is no global government to implement global solutions. What exists, indeed all that can work, is for nations and jurisdictions to do the right thing directly, AND set the example for others to follow to solve their problems.”

“Did we just call dirty air a global problem? No! We passed the Clean Air Act. What works is ‘Think globally, act locally, and set the example.’”

## WHAT ARE THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA SAYING?

In general, the more liberal media are not concerned about continued population or immigration growth. Their concern is that the economy keeps growing and that virtually all who wish enough to be and get here can stay. While the conservative media will sometimes want to limit immigration, especially illegal immigration, they too are concerned mostly with promoting our culture of always more growth. In short, virtually no mainstream media will even acknowledge limits to growth, limits to our population, or any environment or social concerns.

### THE NEW YORK TIMES

*The New York Times* may be better than average in noting that population growth contributes to environmental decay, but they don’t go so far as to say we should advocate reducing that growth (still looking for economic growth). In an article titled “Humans Are Speeding Extinction and Altering the Natural World at an ‘Unprecedented’ Pace”<sup>14</sup> by Brad Plumer, May 6, 2019, they say: “With the human population passing 7 billion, activities like farming, logging, poaching, fishing and mining are altering the natural world at a rate ‘unprecedented in human history.’”

This seems to be about as good as it gets, and when immigration becomes involved, the economy becomes paramount, as in “Sharp Cuts in Immigration Threaten U.S. Economy and Innovation”<sup>15</sup> by Austan Goolsbee, Oct. 11, 2019. Here, they note: “Without sustained immigration, economic growth will be notably slower. Moody Analytics analyzed the data and estimated that if annual United States immigration stayed at only 200,000 rather than a more normal one million, gross domestic product would be \$1 trillion lower a decade from now.”

But then, Goolsbee is a professor of economics at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business. What will it take for the *Times* to expound on two sides of the issue and even decide that saving the planet might be worthwhile?

### PUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM (PBS)

PBS just will not acknowledge downsides to population growth or increased immigration under virtually any circumstances in any programming. In a February 2020 segment of *Newshour* on homelessness in California they ask: “Can California figure out a way to house its growing homeless population?”<sup>16</sup>

The segment takes the view that only providing (always) more housing is the answer, and how to do that is the only problem. No mention of slowing population growth, immigration, or limiting demand! No mention of how more people, more housing, more cars will impact traffic, water, schools or carbon emissions. And the end board notes that “From 2017-2019, the homeless population in San Francisco grew by 30 percent.” Does anyone at PBS, or in California, have any appreciation of logic or reality?

The March 2020 issue of *Fortune Magazine* included on the same subject and, as expected, it too ignores the demand for housing in cities throughout the world including its highlighting of San Francisco.<sup>17</sup> Never talk of population!

## AND THE SILENCE OF OUR GOVERNMENTS (AT ALL LEVELS)

As noted earlier, most government studies that have been conducted on US population growth have concluded that further growth is not desirable. And, invariably, they are dismissed for political reasons. Growth is the god that pays for the profits. Nothing else matters.

Environmental NGOs, the media, and government are all advocating growth, or at the very least not willing to even consider its downsides. I think it is the NGOs that are most derelict. They know. They hide or even deny. Yes, they conspire. They sacrifice the future to money, religion, and political correctness rather than show leadership and integrity.

## HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED

Organizations and activists that cede their environmental purpose to only social justice, political posturing, and (often self perpetuated) political correctness are shirking their mission and missing the point that if the environment is compromised, all else is lost. We must recognize that overpopulation is a major inhibitor of social justice. Leadership requires education and insight rather than dumbing down and labeling. Without honest recognition of the need to discuss and address authentic sustainability and overpopulation, I believe failure (to the mission, humanity and the Earth) is inevitable. I have many thoughts, based largely on experience in speaking, blogging, writing, conversation, and other activist activities, on techniques that might help bring awareness of the impacts of overpopulation to our dialogue. Some of these ideas, perhaps expanded on via readers' comments, might be published in the future. But, none thus far feel like the silver bullet we all ideally seek. Some high level thoughts on our overpopulation activism having meaningful impact:

1. It is my experience that many, perhaps most of the environmentally aware public, already know of the population problem but are hesitant to bring it up.
2. It is going to require time, persistence and patience.
3. Messages must be repeated many times, over time, to have impact.
4. It will likely require a focused and organized campaign coordinated by a dedicated and funded organization.
5. Targeting one or a small number of influential people or organizations through personal contact may be helpful. Directly targeting organization membership may also be helpful.
6. A strategy and associated tactics need to be developed and frequently reviewed via captured metrics.

7. It will likely require many activists working in unity outside of their normal spheres.

## A BIT OF INSPIRATION

*Population growth is the primary source of environmental damage.*

-Jacques Cousteau (expert on sea life)

*The raging monster upon the land is population growth. In its presence, sustainability is but a fragile theoretical concept.*

-E.O. Wilson (biologist, naturalist, and writer)

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

-Margaret Mead (1901-1978)  
American cultural anthropologist

## SUMMARY

As I write this Forum piece, concerns and action about the spread of coronavirus is occupying all the headlines in the US and the entire world. Yet, I have heard not a word about the impact of high population levels and population density on the spread of this or disease in general. Where is leadership with integrity? Where is reason?

Population growth is crucial in its impact on virtually every problem we face, and in its major impact in ever reaching authentic sustainability. Stopping, and then reversing, population growth is a necessary part of the sustainability equation. Environmental organizations and individuals need to incorporate the population connection into their programs or all will ultimately fail.

Doing this will involve putting pressure, over time, on organizations and the media, via their members, thru their blogs, social media, and LTEs to publications as well as via their management. Perhaps we must start by considering their influencers such as authors or think tanks. It will take organization, coordination, unity, and persistence on our part, with perhaps hundreds of population activists participating in a focused manner. It may be helpful to work from the inside via targeted organizations' own members.

What person(s), sustainability or population organization, or perhaps coalition of such organizations, could pull this off?

Whether the domestic lead should be *we are overpopulated* or *immigration must be reduced* is subjective – but I personally believe that *if they see that we are overpopulated, they will reach their own conclusion on immigration*. In any case, we must not let differences of opinion stop us from establishing and maintaining a coordinated and cohesive campaign.

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**Michael G. Hanauer** has been an environmental activist for over thirty years. He has held a number of leadership positions, made numerous presentations and authored many articles, blogs and comments about the fragility of our communities, nation and our planet and its link to our escape from sustainability caused largely by growing overpopulation.

Mike's passion began some 35 years ago while on a bicycle when he realized that blaming all the new pollution, traffic, housing, sprawl and waste problems on developers was largely misdirected. He saw that the problem, and the solution, was much simpler – we must reign in and ultimately reverse our culture of eternal growth.

Mike has served on the National Board of Zero Population Growth (ZPG, now Population Connection) and also served as Board Chair of GrowthBusters.org. At the local level, he has served as co-chair of the New England Coalition for Sustainable Population, as chair of ZPG of Greater Boston and as the coordinator of a local climate action organization.

Mike may be best known for his belief that authentic sustainability should be a major goal and activity of environment related organizations and that a history of ignoring the impacts of corporate control and population growth has prevented meaningful progress on all the other issues. He likes to call restoration of democracy and coming to grips with the fallacy of eternal growth the two overarching issues that hinder success in limiting carbon emissions, cleaning up rivers, dealing with trash, traffic, energy, ocean pollution and pretty much all else.

He has authored a number of articles on the relationships between population growth, consumption and environment including “OverPopulation or OverConsumption: Where should we focus” published by Negative Population Growth and “Sustainable Population: A Necessary Element in Achieving the Sustainable ‘Good Life’ in the U.S. and Beyond” for World Population Balance. In addition, he has led numerous population and environmental workshops in schools, colleges, churches and civic organizations. He has also investigated and documented the goals, operations and funding sources of a well-known conservative think tank. In addition, he frequently comments on blogs in an attempt to bring the overpopulation and authentic sustainability issues front and center.

Mike Hanauer is well known for his position that United States overpopulation is a major problem on a global, national and local scale. Currently he is also up to his eyeballs in growth and democracy issues, believing that the lack of visibility and action on overarching issues greatly hinders any success in dealing with the hundreds of symptoms.

**NOTE:** The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of NPG, Inc.



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