



VERMONTERS FOR A SUSTAINABLE POPULATION

NEWSLETTER (September, 2015)

If you agree with VSPop's Mission... "Inform the public about the harmful impacts that population and consumption currently have, and will have, on the environment, economy, and quality of life of future generations; and motivate Vermonters to take actions that will result in sustainable state, national and global populations." ..., then go to <http://vspop.org/htm/membership.htm> and become a VSPop Member. Thank you!

VSPop NewsFeed

Why "Going Green" is not enough by VSPop's intern Alexander Nathanson has stirred up conversation on Twitter and on Vermont blogs such as the University of Vermont and vtdigger. See Alexander's letter below.

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U.N Spotlights Women's Health, Rights in 2015 World Population Day Statement



Each year on World Population Day, The United Nations makes a statement on what major population issue needs to be brought to light and addressed currently. This year, Women's rights, and health took was the issue addressed. The 2015 World Population day statement issued by U.N Secretary General Ban Ki-moon reads as so. "Not since the end of the Second World War have so many people been forced from their homes across the planet. With nearly 60 million individuals having fled conflict or disaster, women and adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable. Violent extremists and armed groups are committing terrible abuses that result in trauma, unintended pregnancy and infection with HIV and other diseases. Shame and accountability rest squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrators who wage cowardly battles across the bodies of innocents. These women are far from just victims. They have hopes, plans and the potential to make important contributions to our common future. We must staunchly protect women's health, including their sexual and reproductive health, and address their needs as a priority in emergency relief operations. At the same time, we must continuously advance women's human rights in times of both turmoil and calm in order to enable them to help avert conflict, stand strong should it strike, and foster the healing that is so badly needed in war-torn societies. As the United Nations marks its 70th anniversary this year, let us take strength from our founding mission to give hope and support to the most vulnerable. On this World Population Day, I urge countries to commit to bold results that will make 2015 a time of global action, putting people first so that they help build resilience, peace and sustainable prosperity for generations to come."



Why 'going green' is not enough

by Alexander Nathanson

Published in *VTDigger* on July 17, 2015

Alexander was a Summer intern at [Vermonters For A Sustainable Population](#) and is a senior in Environmental Policy at Champlain College.

In a 21st century in which environmental protection has become vital to the future of the planet, we have seen eco-friendly practices becoming more and more routine in everyday households. A new-found awareness and sense of responsibility seems to be sweeping over the common person who believes they have the means to reduce their carbon footprint. Of course, this is amplified by the “go-green” movement that encourages people to use environmentally safe products and devices in an arduous effort to slow climate change.

But going green is hardly enough. In addition to green living – driving less, recycling more and using energy-efficient, eco-friendly products – we also need to consider a more complicated, less talked about subject: family planning and population growth control.

When we take a step back in an effort to understand the increased awareness of climate change in the public’s eye, we begin to see that there indeed was a “breaking” point (so to say) in the year 2009. That year marked the largest percent of decrease in ice cover at the Arctic, and also saw an increase in climate-related disasters. For these reasons, 2009 soon became the year with the most broadcast news coverage of climate change in history. And while all of this media coverage fueled the go-green movement into the worldwide idea it has become, it also piqued the interest of scientists around the world who aimed to understand just how much a family could reduce their carbon outputs by going green. However, nightly news coverage of climate change eventually dropped 70 percent between 2009 and 2011, and continues to plummet.

While data proved undoubtedly that taking green initiatives reduces greenhouse gas emissions, an Oregon State study suggests that these behaviors are not the most effective and efficient means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions that a family can take. [Paul Murtaugh’s study at Oregon State in 2009](#) concluded that if an adult made all the “usual” environmentally friendly lifestyle changes, such as buying a car with 50 percent better gas mileage, driving 33 percent less, switching to energy-efficient light bulbs and windows, replacing an old refrigerator and recycling household trash, they would reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 486 metric tons over their lifetime.

However, the study concluded that by simply having one fewer child, more than 9,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions could be saved, equaling out to just under 20 times more tons of saved in a lifetime when paralleled to what are considered usual green reductions.

While the study is publicly available, and was published in a time when climate change awareness was at an all-time high, most of society seemed to be more focused on the emerging green trends of the times. In fact, hybrid/electric car sales in the U.S. have skyrocketed every year since 2009, while the average family size in the U.S. has only dropped from 2.57 in 2009 to 2.54 in 2014.

While “going green” certainly can help reduce a family’s carbon output, the fact is this simply is not enough to reverse anything considering the rapid climate changes of recent. The amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by oceans is currently increasing by 2 billion tons per year. Air and land temperatures continue to increase, and 2014 was the warmest year worldwide ever recorded. Carbon dioxide emissions have increased 7 percent since the early 1990s, largely due to overpopulation and industrial revolutions in developing nations such as India.

The future of climate change does have some upsides. The renewable energy market is growing around the world, as it has increased 5 percent since 2009, and in that time has been the fastest-growing source of energy consumption. India has implemented policy supporting solar energy expansion and has decided to set a new goal of solar capacity at five times its first estimation. And despite news coverage of climate change falling off in recent years, politicians seem to be embracing green party ideals with increasing frequency, and it is received with positive feedback from potential voters in many cases.

A multi-tiered approach to addressing rapid climate change needs to be taken. Fossil fuel consumption needs to plummet greatly, individuals need to continue to be conscious and frugal regarding their daily practices that could lead to unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions. What needs to be combated moving forward is the problem of overpopulation before it starts, through active and conscious family planning, as it could be a viable solution in cracking the issue of rising greenhouse gas emissions, and in turn further climate change.

We as individuals simply cannot give up on regular green practices just because they are not as effective as we may have initially believed, rather we must understand that there is more we can do to save the planet.

Proactive family planning needs to become a regularly practiced ideal if we really want to preserve our resources and minimize existing problems in our world, such as food insecurity. Not only can this proactive thinking improve family dynamics, but it can also help reduce population totals in the future where nonrenewable resources will be scarce. Active and conscious planning, bringing to light the issue and facts around overpopulation and what it means for the future of our planet as well as continuing green practices such as active recycling, reductions in driving, and switching to more energy efficient appliances in our everyday lives, is a recipe that could actually make a change in our increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

We must understand that many of these proposed behaviors and choices are becoming more of a necessity rather than an alternative, and we need to be willing to adapt our family and lifestyle choices if we are to have a lasting positive impact on the land we inhabit, rather than pointing ourselves toward further degradation.

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WATER POLLUTION A RESULT OF OVERPOPULATION

by George Plumb, VSPop Treasurer and former Executive Director

Published in *VTDigger* on Feb 18, 2015

Since the start of this year’s legislative session there has been much talking and writing about cleaning up Lake Champlain. It started with the governor in his inaugural address and since then, administration officials, legislators, and environmental leaders have joined the chorus for doing something about the worsening pollution of our much cherished lake.

They have cited the causes of the pollution as being approximately 40 percent from agriculture and 60 percent from runoff from impervious surfaces and wastewater treatment.

However, none of these people have addressed the true cause of the water pollution, which is the tremendous growth of the human population in the Lake Champlain basin in recent decades that has resulted in the development of all of these impervious surfaces of homes, building, driveways, roads and parking lots, as well as additional loads on our sewerage treatment plants. Even the other 40 percent of the pollution, agriculture, which nowadays is largely more polluting industrial agriculture, is the result of needing to feed an ever growing population.

On the Vermont portion of the Lake Champlain basin the population has grown from approximately 181,000 in 1960 to 336,000 in 2013 or an astounding 86 percent increase in just five decades. Each person requires about .4 acre of developed land which translates into approximately an additional 70,000 acres of largely impervious land to accommodate this population growth.

The Chesapeake Bay is facing similar problems as Lake Champlain. Fortunately a large group of people in that area realize that it is population growth and the resultant development that is the underlying cause of the problem. I recently spoke at the “Growth and Chesapeake Bay” conference at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. It was attended by approximately 200 people. I did a PowerPoint talk on the world precedent-setting report “What is an Optimal/Sustainable Population for Vermont?” in which water quality is one of 16 indicators. At the end of the talk I urged the attendees to have Maryland do a similar report.

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Among the several speakers two others were also from Vermont — Bill Ryerson from the international Population Media Center based in South Burlington and Tom Butler from the Foundation for Deep Ecology, who lives in Huntington. All of the speakers at the conference, except one, acknowledged that growth cannot go on forever and still clean up Chesapeake Bay. However, sadly, some of the attendees felt that it was unlikely that growth could be stopped and as a result Chesapeake Bay will not be cleaned up. Is the same likely for Vermont?

We have entered a cultural era where most of our political and environmental leaders and organizations, except for the Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club, think that we can grow forever and still maintain a healthy environment. However we can't have infinite growth on a finite planet, and we have already greatly exceeded those limits. Likewise we cannot have infinite growth in a finite watershed without causing major water problems.

What most of our political and environmental leaders do these days instead of trying to prevent environmental problems in the first place is wait until they get really bad and then portray themselves as heroes and say that they will clean up the mess if we will just give them millions of dollars. This has proven to not work, whether it is reducing the pollution of Lake Champlain, stopping the decline of critical forest cover, or reducing greenhouse gas emissions, again, all caused by population growth.

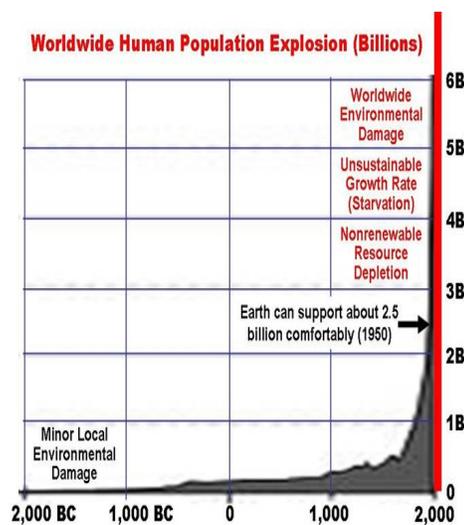
Vermont's population size and growth not only impacts Vermont's environment and water quality it also has an impact on the rest of the Earth as is documented by ecological footprint data, but again you never hear environmental leaders talking about this. As just one example, it takes about approximately one acre of land to feed a person for a year. Because we import approximately 95 percent of our food, when we used to grow most of our own food, this means that we are using some 600,000 acres around the world to feed us and of course

that generates pollution from the Midwest going into other areas like the Gulf of Mexico, which now has dead zones.

When the environmental movement began in the 1960s and '70s, due to worsening environmental problems back then, population growth was at the top of the agenda, as shown in the 1973 "Population Policy Report," published by the Vermont Natural Resources Council. You won't find this amazing report on their website but you will find it on the Vermonters for Sustainable Population website along with other important environmental reports. The report said we had to address population growth and Vermont should determine its "carrying capacity," which was the term used back then instead of "sustainable." It also made many recommendations on how to address the issue. Unfortunately, a few years after that most of our environmental leaders, being more concerned about raising funds than speaking the truth, stopped talking about population growth, never mind trying to actually do anything about it, and the concerns in that report are coming true.

Are today's leaders really environmentalists? As even TV news commentator Bill Maher asks in an interview with Alan Weisman, author of "Countdown," in an insightful and much-needed conversation, "How can you really be an environmentalist unless you are extremely concerned about overpopulation?"

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Population in the News

HOW URBAN SPRAWL IS CONNECTED TO CALI'S WATER CRISIS

[HTTP://WWW.POPULATIONCONNECTION.ORG/ARTICLE/CALIFORNIA-DROUGHT-TESTS-HISTORY-OF-ENDLESS-GROWTH/](http://www.populationconnection.org/article/california-drought-tests-history-of-endless-growth/)

BIRTHRATE DOWN 40% IN 4 YEARS, ABORTIONS DOWN 42% AFTER COLORADO'S EFFORT AGAINST TEEN PREGNANCIES

[HTTP://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2015/07/06/SCIENCE/COLORADOS-PUSH-AGAINST-TEENAGE-PREGNANCIES-IS-A-STARTLING-SUCCESS.HTML? R=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/06/science/colorados-push-against-teenage-pregnancies-is-a-startling-success.html?_r=1)

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