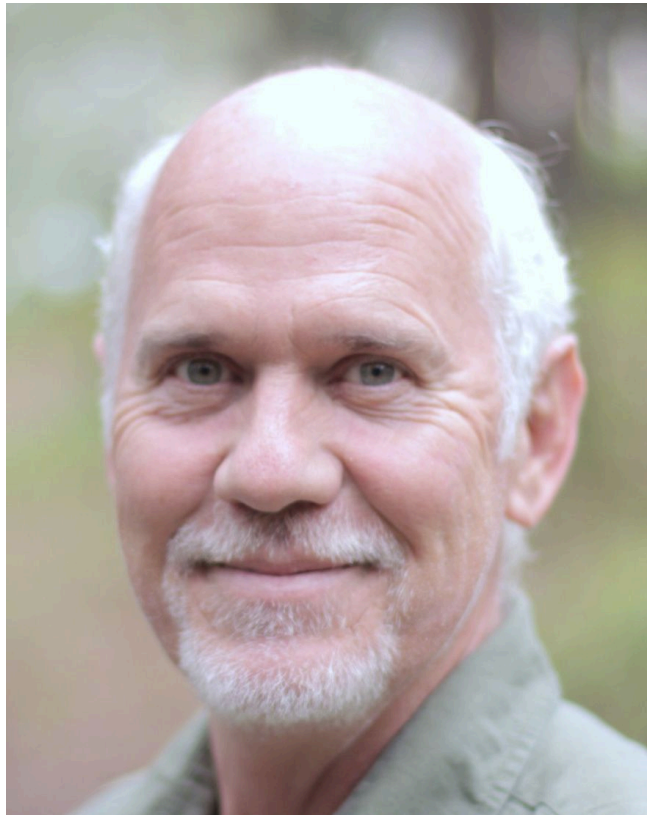


View from the Left: It's a small world after all

December 5, 2022



On November 15, 2022, the world population hit a milestone when it exceeded 8 billion people. More than half of this population lives in seven countries: China, India, United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil and Nigeria. China and India each have about 1.4 billion and the United States comes in third place with 338 million. California has the highest population of any state with 39 million residents.

As births continue to exceed deaths, the world population is projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050 and 10.4 billion by 2100. After this, the world population growth will start to slow down as deaths start to exceed births. The end result will be tragic for many.

It is estimated that the maximum carrying capacity of the earth is between 9 and 10 billion humans. This means that as the population exceeds this number there will not be enough resources for everyone.

Beyond this number there will be shortages of water, food, energy, forest products and nonrenewable resources. There simply will not be enough available land and water to grow the food that we need for everyone to survive. It's a small world after all.

Humans are also exacerbating this impending disaster by polluting our environment. We are adding more and more greenhouse gases that are creating climate extremes which are causing droughts, fires, floods and more destructive weather phenomenon like hurricanes and straight-line windstorms known as derechos. We are starting to see these ramifications in the United States.

All these consequences were foreseen decades ago by projecting the oncoming population explosion. There were some people early on that were advocating zero population growth to stabilize the global population, but this effort has failed.

The results of overpopulation will result in worldwide human suffering and death as the population exceeds the resources that are available to sustain it. This will manifest higher unemployment, more poverty, urban decay, and deterioration of the livable environment.

In the United States, we are consuming more than our fair share. An average middle class American consumes 3 times the subsistence level of food and almost 250 times the amount of clean water needed to survive. If everyone on earth lived like America, the planet would only have a carrying capacity to support around 2 billion humans.

Because of our abundance of resources and wealth compared to the rest of the world, we are more able to take steps to help delay this impending disaster. Since industrialized countries are also much larger consumers of fossil fuels and higher emitters of greenhouse gases, we have an obligation to help less developed countries adapt to the resultant climate changes.

Eventually we will be impacted by the disasters in other countries through increased pressure to emigrate.

These repercussions will hit poorer countries the worst. As a result, we will see increased displacement and immigration in response to famine, drought, and wars over the dwindling resources.

I know it is hard to imagine this future, but it is a predictable outcome of uncontrolled population growth and is already starting to happen. It may not be something that will affect you personally, but this will be a reality for your grandchildren and their children.

We can all take steps now that may delay the effects of this inevitable future. Think globally and act locally. Be more aware of your individual impact on the planet. Try to be more efficient and responsible with your use of resources. Demand that our elected officials enact policies that reduce waste and environmental contamination. Support groups that are making efforts to protect and restore our natural environment. Show compassion for the refugees that come to our country. Be thankful for what you have and share with others who are in need.

Though we will run out of many essential resources in the next hundred years, I will close with some good news.

Scientists estimate we will not run out of oxygen for 1 billion years. We can breathe easy on this. Even so, many other resources will be depleted long before that.

We need less talk and more action. Please do something positive today to help our endangered planet. It's the only one we have.

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