

## **Earth Day and Sustainable Existence on our Planet April 22, 2017 (combined with 2016 essay)**

Dear Mayor Schaaf,

Coinciding with Earth Day 2016, I sent you a letter (email) entitled "Earth Day and Sustainable Existence on our Planet - April 2016 (please see below)." You had recently appeared at Oakland's 2016 Earth Day event. Earth Day is dedicated to the health of our Planet and to our sustainable existence on it. I drew your attention to the sad irony that although we espouse sustainability, the current world and U.S. populations are far above levels which our Planet can sustain.

### **Sustainability of Human Existence on Our Planet**

Sustainability refers to the population size which our Planet can sustain indefinitely. It can sustain a larger population at subsistence levels at which per capita resource requirements are low than it can at higher standards of living such as those of the United States and western Europe today at which per capita resource requirements are much higher. Our standard of living includes the environmental amenities we choose such as open space for species preservation (biodiversity) and the preservation of wilderness.

### **U.S. and World Populations Are Not Sustainable**

Studies (such as the attached study by Walter Youngquist) appear regularly and present the same conclusion: **the current world population of 7.5 billion and the current United States population of 324 million are far too large to be sustainable.** It is very noteworthy that studies have **not** appeared which challenge these conclusions and which posit, for example, that the sustainable world population is 11.2 billion people -- as it is forecast to be by 2050 -- or that the sustainable United States population is 400 million -- as it is forecast to be by 2051. Instead of challenging these studies, growth enthusiasts just ignore them and with tunnel vision plow ahead at full-speed on our population and economic growth trajectory.

### **Grave Implications of These Studies Ignored**

Given the grave implications of these studies, one would expect that at a minimum there would be discussion of what populations levels are sustainable --

even if we claim that nothing can be done to control population growth. But there is **NO** discussion whatsoever. Rather, as Youngquist writes, " The United States has no population policy, and the question of what the optimum size should be has never been addressed by any administration. No political party and no politician want to touch this most basic issue. Yet it is fundamental to the future of the nation as it is faced with diminishing supporting resources."

In Oakland, as in the United States, " No political party and no politician want to touch this most basic issue [what population levels are sustainable at our lowest acceptable standard of living]." Instead our attention is devoted to increasing the housing supply so we can accommodate ongoing population growth.

### **Oakland to take the Lead Toward Sustainable Existence on Our Planet?**

In my Earth Day 2016 letter to you, I asked you to take the lead in breaking the taboo and at least thinking about **this fundamental issue: what population levels are sustainable at our lowest acceptable standard of living**. Unless we take measures to achieve more sustainable population levels, future generations will face a dystopian existence -- at best. Disappointingly, in the months after my Earth Day 2016 letter to you, **not you nor any politician in Oakland dared to address this most fundamental issue**.

### **A 2017 New Year's Resolution for Sustainable Existence on our Planet**

So I wrote you a follow-up letter at the start of 2017 (please see below) reminding you about the issue of Sustainable Existence on our Planet and presenting new studies which show that the full-speed-ahead population and economic growth trajectory we are pursuing cannot be sustained by our Planet. Again disappointingly, during the first quarter of 2017, not you nor any politician in Oakland dared to address **this most fundamental issue: what population levels are sustainable at our lowest acceptable standard of living**.

### **Earth Day and Sustainable Existence on our Planet - April 2017**

On April 22, 2017, you and other politicians will preside over Oakland's Earth Day event and will talk about the need to take care of our Planet. However, the well-being of our Planet and our sustainable existence on it are dependent upon the demands we make upon it, and these demands are a function of population size and per-capita resource use. We cannot preserve the health of our Planet just by

making per capita reductions in demands on our Planet, e.g., per capita reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, if population growth negates these reductions. Energy-saving technology has reduced per capita carbon dioxide emissions since the first Earth Day (April 22, 1970). Total emissions are higher, however, because of population growth. (Please attached papers by Edwin S. Rubenstein, "The Impact of U.S. Population Growth On Global Climate Change" and by Leon Kolankiewicz, "Earth Day and Population: A Missed Opportunity.")

**Will Oakland Take the Lead Toward Sustainable Existence on Our Planet?**

To restate: In Oakland, as in the United States, " No political party and no politician want to touch this most basic issue [what population levels are sustainable at our lowest acceptable standard of living]." Instead our attention is devoted to increasing the housing supply so we can accommodate ongoing population growth, e.g., your plan to build 17,000 new housing units in Oakland.

Dear Mayor Schaaf: **For the third time**, I ask you to please take the lead in at least thinking about these issues and getting others to think about them. You have two young children who presumably will have their own children, and so on. Unless we take measures to achieve more sustainable population levels, future generations will face **a dystopian existence -- at best.**

**Breaking the Taboo on Earth Day, April 2017**

I trust that you and other thinking people of goodwill will finally break the taboo against discussing sustainable population levels at Oakland's 2017 Earth Day event. I am hopeful we will not corroborate physicist Albert Einstein's assessment of human intelligence: " Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former."

Thank you,

William E. Jackman, Ph.D.  
Statistician / SAS & SQL Programmer  
Oakland, California

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## **A 2017 New Year's Resolution for Sustainable Existence on our Planet (January 2017)**

Dear Mayor Schaaf,

On May 15, 2016, I sent you a letter entitled " Earth Day and Sustainable Existence on our Planet" (included below).

### **Sustainability of Human Existence on Our Planet**

Sustainability refers to the population size which our Planet can sustain indefinitely. It can sustain a larger population at subsistence levels at which per capita resource requirements are low than it can at higher standards of living such as those of the United States and western Europe today at which per capita resource requirements are much higher.

### **U.S. and World Populations Are Not Sustainable**

I reminded you that the U.S. and world populations are already much larger than sustainable levels and that we are condemning future generations to "a dystopian existence -- at best." Reputable studies have consistently found the sustainable world population to be about 2 billion - if all our Planet's human residents enjoyed a European standard of living (which is about half the consumption of the average American). **Our planet's current population is 7.3 billion, more than three times the sustainable level.** The sustainable U.S. population is approximately 150-200 million people. This was our nation's size in 1970 which scientists agree is sustainable for our resources and will allow us to protect our fragile ecosystems, conserve our finite resources, and ensure a livable America for future generations. **The current U.S. population is 324 million, roughly twice the sustainable level.**

### **Grave Implications of These Studies Ignored**

Given the grave implications of these studies, one would expect that at a minimum there would be discussion of what populations levels are sustainable --

even if we claim that nothing can be done to control population growth. But there is **NO** discussion whatsoever. The United States has no population policy, and the question of what the optimum size should be has never been addressed by any administration. No political party and no politician at the national, state or local levels, including Oakland, want to touch **this most basic issue**. Yet it is fundamental to the future of the nation as it is faced with diminishing supporting resources." You have two young children, and I asked you to take the lead in at least thinking about these issues and getting others to think about them.

### **Instead We Pursue Growth with Tunnel Vision**

As we start 2017, however, politicians at all levels continue to avoid mentioning **this most basic issue**. Rather politicians and their economists call for faster economic growth -- which is not just bad advice but dangerous advice. Walter Youngquist writes in the attached paper,

"Growth is the idol that nearly all economists worship – there must be continued growth in sales and profits. Consumers must consume more. The Federal Reserve Board of the United States is committed to continued growth in the economy, and strives by means of low interest rates to stimulate growth. If a company does not grow, it is shunned by investors.

"A no-growth, steady state economy is unimaginable to most economists – a notable exception being Herman Daly, who has long advocated a steady state economy. The idea is ignored. But an economy that continues to grow must consume more and more natural resources, only to exacerbate the increasing rate of a decline in both quantity and quality of these resources"

### **The Economy Is Totally Dependent on the Environment, not Vice Versa**

Measures to help the environment are vigorously opposed by some political factions if these measures might impede economic growth. I wrote on this topic (quoted below) in the attached Aug 2011 paper on economic competitiveness,

"Members of Congress and business representatives regularly oppose measures to protect the environment because these measures might 'hurt the economy.' It is dismaying to read this. Don't they consider that the economy depends on the environment (or more generally the Earth's carrying capacity), not the other way around? The environment would do just fine without the economy, but not the other way around. Or as the Prince of Wales put it, 'the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nature and not the other way around' (*Newsweek*, 12/14/2009)."

### **Importing Smart People**

My paper on economic competitiveness also includes a section entitled "None of the Authors Suggest Importing Smart People as a Solution" which deals with the ridiculous notion that the most diverse nation on our Planet has to import smart people to be economically competitive, although non-diverse nations don't see the need to do this. Immigration drives population growth in both destination and source countries, and at this point in history, population growth is not good for our Planet.

### **Fostering Sustainable Existence on Our Planet**

Mayor Schaaf: As we start 2017, I again ask you to take the lead in at least thinking about and discussing how we can foster sustainable existence on our Planet and getting others to think about and discuss these issues. In addition to the paper by Walter Youngquist, I have also attached excellent papers by Dr. Karen I. Shragg, Leon Kolankiewicz, and David Simcox. If you are too busy to read these papers, please have your staff read them and give you a summary of their essence. (If you have concerns about opening these attachments from this email, you can find them at [www.npg.org](http://www.npg.org)).

### **Economic Growth Is Not An End In Itself**

Please keep in mind: economic growth is not an end in itself; it's a means to the goal of making our lives better. But if economic growth is irreparably damaging

out Planet's life-support systems which make human life possible and sustainable at a standard of living above bare subsistence, then it is time to stop worshipping economic growth.

**Breaking the Taboo**

I trust that you and other thinking people of goodwill will break the taboo against discussing sustainable population levels and that we will not corroborate physicist Albert Einstein's assessment of human intelligence: " Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former."

Thank you,

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Statistician / SAS & SQL Programmer  
Oakland, California

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(April 2016)**

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**Sustainability of Human Existence on Our Planet**

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