Earth Day 2026 and Sustainable Existence on our Planet.

Population Levels and Taboos

By William E. Jackman, PhD
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This letter/essay (Earth_Day_2026.pdf) is posted at

https://www.jackmanstatistics.com/commentary.html

at the top of the **Earth Day and Sustainable Existence** section along with previous annual letters on this subject. This Earth Day 2026 letter/essay is **only available online**.

The Honorable Barbara Lee

Mayor of Oakland, California

Dear Mayor Lee,

Congratulations on your almost first year as Mayor of Oakland (you assumed office on May 20, 2025.) You have had your hands full with a myriad of issues, and Oakland's large budget deficit has made your work much harder.

I am an Oakland native and a graduate of Oakland High School, but I have never had the opportunity to meet you in person although I have seen you speak in person. However, our drummer, Albert Brooks, MD, sees you when he and his wife go out to dinner in Oakland. (Our former drummer was Johnny Apperson who worked with you in Ron Dellum's office in Washington, D.C.)

A livable future for all of us

I know you are concerned about leaving a livable future to your sons and grandchildren and to all of us, now and in the future. This means taking care of the planet that makes our lives possible. Your predecessors, Libby Schaaf, Sheng Thao, and Kevin Jenkins were also concerned about taking care of our planet and showed a strong interest in environmental issues. **I wrote an Earth Day letter to them each year for the past 11 years**, to Libby during her eight years as Mayor of Oakland, to Sheng during her two

years as Mayor of Oakland, and last year to Interim Mayor Kevin Jenkins. All were receptive to the issues I presented in my Earth Day letters as I believe you will also be.

Earth Day 2026 and Sustainable Existence on Our Finite Planet

Our Earth is a closed system, with a finite amount of matter on our planet and in its atmosphere. **Earth Day is dedicated to the health of our finite Planet and to our sustainable existence within its finite limits.** It should be obvious to thinking people that our planet has finite limits. But apparently it is not. Many in business and government continue to push for population growth and its concomitant economic growth, including housing growth, blithely assuming that our planet can support this.

What population levels are compatible with Sustainable Existence on Our Finite Planet?

Sustainability refers to the population size which our finite planet can **sustain indefinitely** (for example, in 1,000 years in the year 3026) at the minimum standard of living we can accept. For example, what is the maximum population size Earth can sustain during the next 1,000 years so that our descendants in 3026 in the United States can have the same standard of living that we have in the United States today?

Note: Our planet 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. However, most Americans today would not want to live at subsistence levels in order to accommodate a larger population nor would they want their children and grandchildren to have to.

Our standard of living includes environmental amenities we choose such as open space for species preservation, biodiversity, and the preservation of wilderness. These environmental amenities add to our quality of life and happiness. However, these environmental amenities may impede population growth and economic growth.

Estimates of the sustainable world population:

In the range of 2 - 4 billion people

Estimates of the sustainable population of the United States:

In the range of 150 - 200 million people

The following sections are summaries of the findings of various scientific and environmental groups about sustainable population levels for the world and for the United States.

- **NPG Estimates of Sustainable World Population Levels:**

  Should not exceed two billion for the world and

  150 million for the United States.

  NPG (npg.org) has studied sustainability for several decades and has developed expertise on this subject. Their goal for the United States and for the world is population levels that are sustainable for the long haul, e.g., for the next 1,000 years. NPG has recommended an optimal population for the United States of around 150-200 million people, our nation's size in 1970, a golden era of sustainability. (The U.S. resident population in 1970 was officially 203,392,031, according to the 1970 Census conducted on April 1 of that year. **The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970, in the United States**.)

  More recently NPG has refined their sustainable population recommendations: "We judge that a **sustainable population for the United States should not exceed 150 million, and should probably not exceed two billion for the world."**

  https://npg.org/library/forum-series/proposed-national-population-policy.html

When was the last time that the U.S. population was 150 million?

Around 1950: The U.S. population was last at 150 million **around 1950**. According to the 1950 United States Census, the population was approximately 152 million, marking a significant growth period following World War II and the beginning of the baby boom.

The US population in 1949 was approximately 149.2 million. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population at 149,188,130, marking a 1.74% increase from 1948. This figure represented a significant postwar increase, contributing to a total growth of over 13% since the 1940 census.

- **Paul R. Ehrlich:**

  What is the maximum human population Earth can sustain?

  Between 2 and 4 billion or between 1.5 and 2 billion.

  "Because these environmental impacts are all directly related to human numbers, recent estimates of a sustainable human population tend to put forward much lower numbers, **between 2 and 4 billion**. "Paul R. Ehrlich stated in 2018 that the **optimum population is between 1.5 and 2 billion.**

  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_population#:~:text=Because%20these%20environmental%20impacts%20are,between%201.5%20and%202%20billion.

- **Australian Academy of Science:**

  World carrying capacity of around 2 billion

  "So, if everyone on Earth lived like a middle- class American, then the planet might have **a carrying capacity of around 2 billion**."

  https://www.science.org.au/curious/earth-environment/how-many-people-can-earth-actually-support#:~:text=So%20if%20everyone%20on%20Earth,support%20a%20much%20higher%20figure

- **International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (2023):**

  The sustainable population for the world is below 4 billion.

  On October 18, 2023, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (2023) broadcast a Yes-or-No debate on the statement: "The population of humans that can be supported sustainably on the planet at a reasonable standard of living is **below 4 billion**."

  https://www.niussp.org/environment-and-development/can-earth-support-4-billion-people-sustainably-and-well/#:~:text=On%20October%2018%2C%202023%2C%20the,abridged%20version%20of%20Joel%20E.

Note: The current (April 2026) world population of 8.28 billion is already **more than four times** a sustainable world population of about 2 billion, the number that three of the four studies above recommend.

What is the current population of the United States?

As of April 2026, the estimated population of the United States is approximately **342.4 to 349 million**, based on projections from the U.S. Census Bureau and other trackers. (The population is growing at a rate of roughly 0.5%–0.6% per year, making it the third most populous country in the world.) Census.gov

Taking an average of the two April 2026 population figures:

(342.4 + 349 million) / 2 = 691.4 / 2 = **345.7 million**

So, the **current U.S. population** of **345.7** million is **already more than twice (2.3 times) its sustainable level** of **150 million**.

345.7 million (April 2026 U.S. population) / 150 million (sustainable U.S. population) = 2.30

Taking **the inverse of this ratio** shows that **the sustainable population of the United States is about 43.4% of the current population or 56.6% less than the current U.S. population.**

150 million (sustainable U.S. population) / 345.7 million (April 2026 U.S. population) = 0.434 or 43.4%

1.0 – 0.434 = 0.566 or 56.6%

Estimate of the sustainable population of California:

17,156,000 million people.

It is shown above that the sustainable population of the United States is about 43.4% of the current population (or 56.6% less than the current U.S. population). This same ratio can be used to obtain **an estimate of the sustainable population of California**.
As of **July 1, 2025**, California's population is estimated to be **39,529,000** people.

(July 1, 2025 population of California) * Sustainable percentage =
39,529,000 * 0.434 = 17,155,586 or approximately **17,156,000 million** people

The sustainable population of California is approximately 17,156,000 million people, so California's population of 39,529,000 as of July 1, 2025 is about 2.30 times (230 percent) the sustainable population level of the state.

This figure of **17,155,586** for the sustainable population of California is close to California's population of **17,072,000 on January 1, 1962**. (This 1962 figure is 7,513,000 (or 78.6%) greater than California's population of **9,559,000 on January 1, 1946**, the year the **Baby Boom** began
(Federal Reserve Economic Data | FRED | St. Louis Fed)).

The Baby Boom in California

The Baby Boom began in California, as in the rest of the United States, in **1946** following the end of World War II. This demographic surge saw birth rates increase significantly, lasting from 1946 to 1964. California became a major center for this boom, eventually hosting the largest population of baby boomers in the nation. (Stanford Center on Longevity)

Unsustainable population levels and high standards of living are pushing planet Earth beyond its carrying capacity.

The level of demands that humans make on planet Earth is determined by human population levels and resource use per capita. The above discussion showed that current human population levels for the world, the United States, and California are **not sustainable**.

Tipping Points (warning signs)

Estimates of the sustainable world population range from about 2 billion to ten billion (from business-oriented groups). Business grabs onto the ten billion estimate, but even the groups that generate these high, optimistic population estimates caution that they are not valid if there are clear warning signs (**Tipping Points**) that these population levels **overshoot the carrying capacity of Earth. In fact, there are abundant and clear "Tipping Points"**.

Our descendants will pay the price.

To maintain current standards of living for unsustainable population levels**, humans are taking more from our planet than it can restore** and are living in an unsustainable manner. Our descendants in 50 years or 100 years or 1,000 years will not be able to have our same high standard of living because we have **drawn down the earth's carrying capacity** by taking more from it than it can restore.

- **Tipping Point: Wildfires in the Los Angeles area in January 2025**
  (Please see below).

- **Tipping Point: Study by the United Nations University warns**, "Humans are eating away at their own life support systems at a rate unseen in the past 10,000 years." (NPG newsletter April 6, 2023, p. 1)

- **Tipping Point:** "**Earth's climate has entered uncharted territory.**"
  "But the heat is also just one way the planet is telling us something is gravely wrong, they said."
  "Heat sets the pace of our climate in so many ways… it's never just the heat," said Kim Cobb, a climate scientist at Brown University.
  "Dying coral reefs, more intense Nor'easters and the wildfire smoke that has choked much of North America this summer are among the many other signals of climate distress."
  (by Isbella O'malley of *Associated Press*, "Scientists: Earth's climate has entered uncharted territory" which appeared in the *East Bay Times* of July 7, 2023, p. A4)

- **Tipping Point:** Bonn, Germany, 25 October 2023 – A recent United Nations University report **warns about risk tipping points** with irreversible impacts on people and planet. The report warns of **six risk tipping points** ahead of us:
  Accelerating extinctions
  Groundwater depletion
  Mountain glaciers melting
  Space debris
  Unbearable heat
  Uninsurable future
  "Systems are all around us and closely connected to us: ecosystems, food

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systems, water systems and more. When they deteriorate, it is typically not a simple and predictable process. Rather, instability slowly builds until suddenly a tipping point is reached and the system changes fundamentally or even collapses, with potentially catastrophic impacts."

- **Tipping Point:** "**Study: Earth is in danger in nearly all ecological ways.**"

  "Earth has pushed past seven out of eight scientifically established safety limits and into 'the danger zone' not just for an overheating planet that's losing its natural areas, but for the well-being of people living on it, according to a new study."

  "The study by the international scientist group Earth Commission published in Wednesday's journal *Nature* looks at climate, air pollution, phosphorus and nitrogen contamination of water from fertilizer overuse, groundwater supplies, fresh surface water, the unbuilt natural environment and the overall natural and human-built environment."

  "We are in a danger zone for most of the Earth system boundaries," the study concluded.

  (by Seth Borenstein of *Associated Press*, "Study: Earth is in danger in nearly all ecological ways" which appeared in the *East Bay Times* of June 1, 2023, p. A4)

- **Tipping Point:** "**Earth's ability to sustain human life in peril"**

  "Earth's life support systems have been so damaged by human activity that the planet is now 'well' outside the safe operating space for humanity,' scientists warn in what's billed as the 'first scientific health check for the entire planet', reports *Smithsonian Magazine*. Researchers at the University Copenhagen in Denmark looked at nine planetary boundaries, benchmarks that lay out the parameters for human survival. They concluded that six of the boundaries have already been exceeded: climate change, biodiversity, freshwater availability, land use, biogeochemical balance (which measures nutrient runoff) and novel entities

(which encompasses microplastics and radioactive waste). (*The Week*, "October 6, 2023, p. 19)

- **Tipping Point: Perilous times on planet Earth"**

  A new study published in the journal *Bioscience*, The 2024 state of the climate report: Perilous times on planet Earth, found 25 of Earth's 35 "vital signs" have reached record levels of concern. The researchers examined critical indicators such as carbon dioxide levels, human population, ocean temperatures, and sea ice levels. Unsurprisingly, they determined "the future of humanity hangs in the balance" and Earth is reaching a "critical and unpredictable new phase of the climate crisis."

  https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/74/12/812/7808595?login=false

- **November 2025 report from the Lancet on heat-related deaths**

  The report found the number of heat-related deaths has surged 63% since the 1990s, averaging 546,000 a year. In 2024, the hottest year on record, the average person was exposed to a record 16 additional-health-threatening hot days. Air pollution from wildfire smoke was linked to a record 154,000 deaths in 2024.

  This data is from the Countdown on Health and Climate Change report, led by University College London and produced in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

  Twelve of the report's 20 indicators for the health risks and impacts of climate change set new records, including extreme precipitation events and food insecurity from climate extremes.

- **2025 Global Tipping Points Report"**

  Recent studies indicate that Earth has likely passed its first major **climate tipping**

point, with coral reefs experiencing widespread, irreversible dieback due to sustained global heating of approximately 1.4° C. The **2025 Global Tipping Points Report** highlights that this coral collapse, along with the destabilization of polar ice sheets and Amazon rainforest vulnerability, indicates the planet is nearing a state of "ecological danger"

Key Findings on 2025 Climate Tipping Points Report

- **Coral Reefs:** Widespread mortality is already occurring (the first system-level tipping point crossed). Even if warming is stabilized at 1.5° C, most warm-water coral reefs are predicted to be lost.
- **Amazon Rainforest:** A combination of deforestation and climate change is pushing the Amazon towards a tipping point, where it could transform from a carbon sink into a carbon source.
- **Ice Sheet Collapse:** Greenland's ice sheet and parts of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet may have already passed a point of no return, threatening catastrophic long-term sea-level rise.
- **Ocean Circulation (AMOC):** There is an increased likelihood of a collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, which would cause drastic weather shifts across the globe. Yale E360

The reports, often involving hundreds of scientists (e.g., from the University of Exeter's Global Systems Institute), suggest these systems are interconnected, meaning one tipping point could trigger others. These findings highlight that the world is in a "new reality" that requires immediate, unprecedented action to prevent further crossing of irreversible thresholds. EurekAlert! +1

Population growth, Global Warming*, and Fires in Los Angeles

A taboo against discussions of sustainable population levels.

(* Global warming" refers to the rise in global temperatures due mainly to the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Although it is one aspect of **climate change**, it is the aspect that most affects us.)

Wildfires in the Los Angeles area in January 2025

At least 31 people died across the Los Angeles area after destructive wildfires fueled by dry conditions and powerful winds erupted January 7, 2025. More than 18,000 structures have been destroyed, and more than 200,000 people were forced to evacuate. The fires are among the most destructive of human property in Southern California's history and rank among the most expensive wildfires in U.S. history.

Unsustainable population growth is the major driver of global warming and of the January 2025 wildfire disaster in Los Angeles.

Numerous reports were issued identifying global warming as a major factor in the January 2025 wildfire disaster in Los Angeles. However, these reports **fail to Identify unsustainable population growth** as the major driver of global warming. **But there is a taboo against discussing sustainable population levels**.

Examples of these reports/analyses:

Are wildfires caused by climate change or something else? The question is flawed. Opinion by Jordan Thomas, January 24, 2025

https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/opinion-are-wildfires-caused-by-climate-change-or-something-else-the-question-is-flawed/ar-AA1xN3l7?ocid=BingNewsSerp

The Burning State: Understanding California's Escalating Fire Seasons

Story by B.Sc. Jessica Taylor, January 24, 2025

The Climate's Role©The Climate's Role (image credits: pexels)

https://www.msn.com/en-in/travel/news/the-burning-state-understanding-california-s-escalating-fire-seasons/ss-AA1xNj2R

Climate change made conditions that fed California wildfires more likely and intense, study says. MSN (Microsoft Network) February 1, 2025
https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/climate-change-made-conditions-that-fed-california-wildfires-more-likely-and-intense-study-says/vi-AA1y1GZU?ocid=msedgdhp&pc=U531&cvid=8c9aa00fd10844699108693723 5d1c17&ei=21

Study Finds Climate Change Increased LA Wildfire Risk By 35%, January 29, 2025
https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/study-finds-climate-change-increased-la-wildfire-risk-by-35/vi-AA1y4LBv?ocid=in-article#:~:text=A%20new%20study%20confirms%20that,Ana%20winds%2C%20fueling%20the%20disaster.

Unsustainable human population growth is the major driver of global warming, but there is a taboo against discussions of sustainable population levels.

Unsustainable population levels impair our environment in myriad ways, including global warming. We cannot mitigate nor resolve this grave problem of global warming just by making **per capita** reductions in CO_2 emissions if **overall population growth** negates these per capita reductions.

Population growth negates the benefits of per capita reductions in CO2 emissions.

Energy-saving technology has **reduced per capita carbon dioxide emissions** since the first Earth Day (April 22, 1970). **Total carbon dioxide emissions are higher, however, because of population growth**. Even if mileage standards had risen to 47 mpg as proposed by the Obama administration rather than 37 mpg as counter-proposed by the first Trump administration or if they rose to 50 mpg by 2026 as proposed by the Biden administration, **total** carbon dioxide emissions **will still rise** because of population

growth, thus negating the benefits of higher mpg standards. **Human population growth is a major, if not the major, contributor to global warming. But there is a taboo against discussions of sustainable population levels.**

Business groups and their allies continue to push for population growth without considering whether our planet can sustain it.
They ignore credible studies on sustainable levels of human actitivies but do not conduct their own studies to refute these studies.

Historically and currently, business and its allies in government have pushed for population growth because it drives business profitability and economic growth (for example, growth in Gross National Product (GNP)). Population growth provides more workers – who compete against each other to work for less – and more consumers who drive economic growth. Consumer spending is the main engine of economic growth in the United States, making up about 70% of the US economy.
(Note: American consumers' ability to continue driving the U.S. may be diminished by growing consumer debt. Recent reports, including reports from the Federal Reserve, show that the share of outstanding U.S. consumer debt that is in delinquency is rising.)

Our economic system is committed to growth.

The Federal Reserve Board of the United States is committed to **continued growth** in the economy and strives to stimulate growth. If a company does not grow, it is shunned by investors. Growth is the idol that nearly all economists, especially business economists, worship – there must be continued growth in sales and profits. Consumers must consume more. (Youngquist, December 2016, p.4)

Wall Street prods C-suite executives.

Wall Street gives negative ratings to companies that are not growing and not showing profits, and the compensation and careers of their C-suite executives suffer accordingly.

(Note: C-suite executives are the highest-ranking senior leaders in an organization, responsible for setting company strategy, making high-stakes decisions, and overseeing overall performance. Known as "C-level" because their titles usually start with "Chief" (e.g., CEO, CFO), they drive long-term business goals, manage company culture, and report to the board of directors.)

"This is a new chapter, and it's all about growth."

For example, Wall Street recently [March 2026] gave negative ratings to Target when the discounter reported another quarter of declining sales and profits [2025, Q4]. Michael Fiddelke, its new CEO who took over in February 2026, promises to turn things around and promises that sales will grow every quarter this year. "This is a new chapter, and it's all about growth," said Fiddelke.

Not giving much thought to our planet

It is unlikely that Fiddelke and other C-suite executives who proclaim "it's all about growth" give much thought **to how much more growth our planet can take**. Their compensation and careers depend on growing their companies and growing their profits. If they don't achieve these goals, Wall Street will judge them harshly.

How to grow sales

How do Fiddelke and his counterparts plan to increase sales? Since most Americans have already bought all the stuff they can buy, Fiddelke likely favors population growth, i.e., more consumers, to drive more Target sales. However, Americans are not having enough children in business' view, so Fiddelke and other C-suite executives tend to favor increased immigration to grow the U.S. population. Also, foreign-born families in the U.S. have larger average size compared to the overall nation.

Growing the U.S. population that is already far beyond sustainable size.

Fiddelke and other C-suite executives who want to grow the U.S. population and drive

economic growth apparently do not comprehend that the current (about **345.7 million** in April 2026) **U.S. population is already more than twice (2.3 times) its sustainable level of about 150 million**.

The IMF sends out "sober" message about slower economic growth.

International economic associations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank promote economic growth, report on it, and send out worried messages ("The global outlook has abruptly darkened") if population growth and economic growth are less than predicted. For example, the IMF recently (April 14, 2026) sent out the "sober" message that due to tensions between the United States and Iran, the IMF was lowering its global economic growth forecast. The IMF now expects the global economy to grow by 3.1 percent this year, a slowdown from its earlier forecast of 3.3 percent. "The global outlook has abruptly darkened following the outbreak of war in the Middle East," Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the I.M.F.'s chief economist, wrote in the report. "The war interrupted what had been a steady growth trajectory."

Gourinchas' "steady growth trajectory"

Growth booster Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the I.M.F.'s chief economist, is worried that "The war [in the Middle East] interrupted what had been a steady growth trajectory." It appears that he does not know that **the current world population of 8.28 billion (April 2026) is already more than four times a sustainable world population of about 2 billion**.

The U.S. government is committed to population growth.

The U.S. government fosters population growth and becomes alarmed when this growth slows. (From an *Associated Press* report by Fatima Hussein and Mike Schneider reprinted in the *East Bay Times* on January 6, 2026, p. A3)

"WASHINGTON – The U.S. population is projected to grown by 15 million people in 30 years, a smaller estimate than in previous years, due to President Trumps' hard-line immigration policies and an expected lower fertility rate, the Congressional Budget Office said Wednesday."

"The country's total population is projected to stop growing in 2056 and remain roughly the same size as in the previous year, the CBO said. But without immigration, the population would start to shrink in 2030 as deaths start to exceed births, making immigrants an increasingly important source of population growth, according to the report."

Apparently, these planet-wrecking, population-growth boosters in the Congressional Budget Office are unaware that the current (April 2026) U.S. population of **345.7** million is **already more than twice (2.3 times) its sustainable level** of **150** million. The CBO wants a larger U.S. population, but a smaller U.S. population is better for the good of our planet and those who occupy on Earth Day 2026. This is why groups such as **Negative Population Growth (NPG)** advocate for achieving a smaller, more sustainable United States population—ideally reducing it to approximately 150 million—through a combination of promoting smaller families, drastic reductions in immigration, and public education.

Can the United States Move to Sustainable Population Levels for the Sake of Future Generations as Negative Population Growth (NPG) recommends?

The current U.S population of approximately 345.7 million people is over twice the sustainable level of approximately 150 million people. So, the first step toward a more sustainable U.S. population would be to stabilize our population at its current level and then gradually reduce it **as NPG recommends**. **This will be difficult for U.S. residents to accomplish because they are not the primary determinant of U.S. population**

levels. **Immigration is now the "primary driver of U.S. population growth."**

From the Wall Street Journal: Immigrants dominate U.S. population growth.

Immigrants are having a huge impact on the nation's population growth, new federal estimates show. Newcomers accounted for **84% of U.S. growth** in the year ended June 30, the Census Bureau said Thursday, continuing a trend since the Covid-19 pandemic. Dec 19, 2024

https://www.wsj.com/us-news/census-data-immigration-state-population-changes-9f8f4508

From the U.S. Census Bureau: Immigrants dominate U.S. population growth.

Population growth in the United States was primarily driven by rising net international migration. Net international migration, which refers to any change of residence across U.S. borders (the 50 states and the District of Columbia), was the critical demographic component of change driving growth in the resident population. Dec 19, 2024

https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2024/population-estimates-international-migration.html#:~:text=The%20growth%20was%20primarily%20driven,growth%20in%20the%20resident%20population

If you build it for them, they'll come.

During the last year, concerns about the sustainability of our way of life and about the health of our planet have been drowned out by strident warnings about

- California's housing shortage
- California's "stagnant" population growth (in danger of "plateauing")

Governor Gavin Newsom, Population Growth Booster

Newsom plans to take legal action against cities that are **not** growing housing fast enough to accommodate their populations: "City warned over housing delays. Newsom threatens action by attorney general if growth plans aren't certified."

"Of the 15 cities and counties Gov Gavin Newsom threatened Wednesday with legal

action over housing law violations, only one is in the Bay Area: Half Moon Bay." (*East Bay Times*, March 29, 2026, p. B3)

Governor Newsom has long favored housing growth and its concomitant population growth. When he was running for governor in 2018, he pledged to build 3.5 million units "because our solutions must be as bold as the problem is big." (*East Bay Times*, March 11, 2026, p. A6)

Newsom blasts the CEQA for doing its job.

Newsom sees himself as being for environmental quality and for "sustainability" but his actions are not consistent with these goals. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was signed into law in 1970 by President Reagan in response to strong demand for this act by Californians. (The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970.) The CEQA "generally requires state and local government agencies to inform decision makers and the public about the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the extent feasible."

Newsom has blasted the CEQA for doing its job, charging that the environmental reviews the CEQA requires for major, new building projects are holding up housing projects builders are pushing for. (*East Bay Times*, March 6, 2023, p. A1)

Legislators seek to speed up home construction.

Like Governor Brown, other California legislators are pushing for faster housing growth to accommodate their populations. For example, Buffy Wicks, D-Oakland, said in a recent statement: "California is a leader in innovation – it's time we apply that mindset to solving our housing crisis." (*East Bay Times*, March 30, 2023, p. B3)

Wicks, the mother of two children, cites "our housing crisis." It is noteworthy that she did not cite our "population crisis" although Wicks wants a livable future for her children and their children. As shown earlier,

the sustainable population of California is approximately 17,156,000 million people, so California's population of 39,529,000 as of July 1, 2025 is about 2.30 times (230 percent) the sustainable population level of the state.

Our sustainable existence within our planet's finite limits

It does not appear that Governor Gavin nor Assemblymember Wicks comprehend that our state and our nation and our planet have finite limits of how much human-induced growth they can take. Nor does it appear that they understand the meaning of sustainable population levels.

From the first paragraph of this essay,

"Our Earth is a closed system, with a finite amount of matter on our planet and in its atmosphere. **Earth Day is dedicated to the health of our finite Planet and to our sustainable existence within its finite limits.** It should be obvious to thinking people that our planet has finite limits. But apparently it is not. Many in business and government continue to push for population growth and its concomitant economic growth, including housing growth, blithely assuming that our planet can support this."

As discussed earlier, environmental groups and groups that study population issues have produced estimates of sustainable population levels for the world and for the United States and by extension to California.

These sustainable population levels should not exceed

- **two billion for the world**
- **150 million for the United States**
- **17,156,000 for California**

They need to first refute the existing studies on sustainable population levels.

If Governor Brown and that Assemblymember Wicks want higher population levels for

California and the United States, **it is incumbent on them** to commission their own studies on sustainable population levels that refute the existing ones which have lower levels of sustainable populations than Governor Brown and Assemblymember Wicks want. It is remarkable that someone like Governor Brown with many years of experience in government* has never commissioned a study on sustainable population levels which support his push for higher population levels and more housing in California.

- * two terms (8 years) as Mayor of San Francisco
- two terms (8 years) as Lieutenant Governor of California
- two terms (over 7 years) as Governor of California

Bay Area population growth remains stagnant.

As shown earlier, California's population is already more than twice its sustainable level. Regardless, pro-population growth business writers like **Ethan Varian of the Bay Area News Group** warn us that California's population growth is "stagnant" and encourage faster population growth.
East Bay Times, March 27, 2026, pp. A1-A5)

Veteran population-growth booster **Dan Walters of CalMatters** also warns us regularly about California's "stagnant" population growth. For example, in his February 17, 2026 column in the *East Bay Times* (p. A6) he cites California's "stagnant population growth." In his February 8, 2026 column in the *East Bay Times* (p. A8), Walters writes,

"There is, however, no doubt that California is, at best, at a population plateau – either gaining of losing very slowly after a 175-year history of sometime stunning levels of population growth. During the 1980—90 decade, for example, the state's population soared by about 6 million people, a nearly 25% gain, thanks to high levels of immigration and a lofty birth rate."

Walters writes for *CalMatters*, but his column appears almost daily in the *East Bay Times*. So, we can assume that his views on "stunning levels of population growth"

“thanks to high levels of immigration and a lofty birth rate” are representative of those of the senior management of the Bay Area News Group.

Walters has years of experience writing on California politics but incredibly it appears that he has never considered that the economy, including the California economy, depends on the environment (or more generally the Earth's carrying capacity), not the other way around. Although California’s population of **39,529,000** as of July 1, 2025 is **already about 2.30 times (230 percent) the sustainable population level of the state** of approximately **17,156,000** million people, Walters continues to foolishly advocate faster population growth in California like the “stunning levels of population growth” during the 1980—90 decade.

Returning in 2026 to Taking from Our Planet What It Can Restore

Let us rededicate ourselves on Earth Day 2026 to bringing our demands on our planet back into balance with what it can restore. Our demands now greatly exceed our planet’s restorative capabilities. As noted above, a recent study by the United Nations University warns, “Humans are eating away at their own life support systems at a rate unseen in the past 10,000 years.” **8.28 billion people, many with high per capita resource use, exceed the carrying capacity of our planet to restore itself.** We humans today are able to get away with this by using our planet unsustainably, but future generations will pay the price.

The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nature.

There are abundant and clear warning signs that Earth cannot sustain the current world population of **8.2 billion much less 9 to 10 billion people** (see “Tipping Points” above). But business tends to dismiss these warnings and continues to push for population growth to have more workers and more consumers (and higher profitably and more favorable quarterly ratings by the stock market). Business assumes that the **environment is an add-on to the economy** and will dutifully provide to the economy

what is requested of it. Business and its government allies blithely assume that the environment does **not** have limits and will provide whatever is requested of it.

Business groups appear **not** to comprehend 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 (now King Charles III) put it, "**the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nature and not the other way around**." (Newsweek, 12/14/2009).

The official theme for Earth Day 2026

"The official theme for Earth Day 2026 (April 22) is "Our Power, Our Planet." This theme highlights the urgent need to accelerate the transition to clean energy—such as wind and solar—while empowering individuals, communities, and businesses to take collective action against climate change and protect the environment."

However, this official theme **avoids the main reason we are wrecking our planet: 8.28 billion people, many with high per capita resource use, exceed the carrying capacity of our planet to restore itself.**
Using more wind and solar energy will not enable our planet to support unsustainable population levels. However, there is a long-standing taboo against discussing sustainable population levels. As expected, the website for the official theme for Earth Day 2026 **does not mention sustainable population levels.**

Sincerely,

William E. Jackman, PhD
Statistician/SAS & SQL Programmer
Jazz and Popular Pianist

Oakland, California

April 19, 2026

I am a second-generation Irish-American who grew up with immigrant Irish grandparents and aunts in Oakland. I am a graduate of Oakland High School and of the College of Engineering at UC Berkeley. I am fluent in Spanish.

Pet peeve: I use the back side of letters and notices to make copies of checks, etc. This helps our planet. The unnecessary practice of printing "**This page intentionally left blank**" makes the otherwise blank back side of letters and notices hard to use.

Source of Quotes

Youngquist, Walter, "Framework of the Future", December 2016, www.npg.org/forum-papers2.html