

How Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization (SUSPS) Advised Congress in 2001

An historical perspective followed by the official testimony

FRED ELBEL, DICK SCHNEIDER, WILLIAM G. ELDER, AND STUART H. HURLBERT

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, a group of Sierra Club activists initially known as Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization (SUSPS) was invited by Congress to present testimony on immigration and the U.S. “population boom” to the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims.

We did so, concluding:

We urge Congress to enact a comprehensive population policy for the United States that includes an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths) and net immigration (immigration minus emigration).

The full 2001 written testimony follows this perspective piece. As current and past members of the Sierra Club, we present this material in the hope that present and future generations of Americans will come together to urge Congress to adopt a true conservation-based United States population policy that includes reductions in both fertility and immigration as fundamental components of population stabilization and environmental protection.

Fred Elbel is an IT consultant and Director of Colorado Alliance for Immigration Reform (CAIRCO.org).

William G. Elder is a retired health care management consultant. He is editor of the website ApplyTheBrakes.org. He was the chair of the SUSPS steering committee at the time the testimony was written and presented.

Stuart Hurlbert is a longtime member of the Sierra Club, a professor of biology emeritus at San Diego State University, and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Dick Schneider is a longtime environmental and population activist. He currently serves on the board of directors of Californians for Population Stabilization.

The 2018 summer edition of *The Social Contract* focused on important aspects of both global and U.S. population growth.¹ A number of excellent books have also recently been published on population issues.²

The interrelations among population, immigration, and the environment are even more pressing now than they were before the turn of the twenty-first century, yet this topic has been virtually abandoned by environmental organizations, Congress, and the media.

POPULATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Aggregate U.S. population, multiplied by per capita consumption and waste production, results in overall environmental impact. As America’s population increases, overall environmental impact increases correspondingly. This relationship has been expressed by biologist Paul Ehrlich and physicist John Holdren as the “foundational formula,” $I=PAT$, where total environmental impact (I) of a human population equals population size (P), times affluence (A) or resource consumption per person, times technology (T) or environmental impact per unit of resource produced, e.g. per ton of beef or megawatt of energy.³

Fifty years ago, the environmental community understood this fairly obvious connection. As explained in the comprehensive essay, “Forsaking Fundamentals — The Environmental Establishment Abandons U.S. Population Stabilization,” environmentalists and authors Leon Kolankiewicz and Roy Beck noted that “By working on both U.S. population and U.S. consumption factors, the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s had a comprehensive approach to move toward sustainable environmental protection and restoration in this country.”⁴

By the early 1970s, U.S. population growth was explicitly linked to environmental issues on college campuses and by environmental organizations.

BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION

Many important protective measures for our

nation's natural resources arose from bipartisan legislation during the Nixon era nearly 50 years ago. They included the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species, Clean Air and Water Acts⁵ — along with official protection of large areas of wilderness, including in wilderness Alaska and Utah.⁶ Conservation organizations such as the Sierra Club were instrumental in those efforts.

Sometimes referred to as the nation's "environmental Magna Carta," NEPA was signed into law on January 1, 1970.⁷ This declaration of a national environmental policy stated, "Congress, recognizing the profound impact of man's activity on the interrelations of all components of the environment, particularly the profound influences of population growth..."⁸

There was bipartisan recognition that ongoing and rapid population growth of our nation has an important environmental impact. In 1972, two population commissions — the President's Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, headed by John D. Rockefeller III, and the Select Commission on Population, headed by Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame — concurred that U.S. population must be stabilized and that immigration policy would have to respect this demographic reality.⁹

The Rockefeller Commission concluded that "gradual stabilization of our population through voluntary means would contribute significantly to the nation's ability to solve its problems." The Hesburgh Commission presciently warned that immigration numbers would continue to rise because of pressure exerted by business and ethnic special interest groups.¹⁰

The Immigration Act of 1990 established the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (the Barbara Jordan Commission) in order to evaluate U.S. immigration policy. The Commission's initial recommendations were released in 1995 and were presented to Congress in 1997. President Clinton endorsed the recommendations, stating that the proposals "reflect a balanced immigration policy that makes the most of our diversity while protecting the American work force so that we can better compete in the emerging global economy."¹¹

Barbara Jordan succinctly stated on February 24, 1995, that: "Credibility in immigration policy can be summed up in one sentence: those who should get in, get in; those who should be kept out, are kept out; and those who should not be here will be required to leave."¹²

In 1996, President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development was established after the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (the "Earth Summit"). The Council acknowledged the integral relationship between population stabilization and sustainable development, stating the need to "move toward stabilization of the U.S. population." Its

Population and Consumption Task Force, co-chaired by former U.S. Senator Tim Wirth (D-CO), the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs in the Clinton administration, stated in the introduction to its 1996 report that: "We believe that reducing current immigration levels is a necessary part of working toward sustainability in the United States."¹³

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

United States population was 203 million in 1970, and by 1972, U.S. fertility had voluntarily dropped to replacement level (2.1 children per woman). This did not immediately result in zero population growth for two reasons. First, *population momentum* would cause population to continue to increase. Population momentum is the tendency for population growth to continue because the number of women having children over the next few decades is largely determined by the number of young girls already born. It takes a period of time equal to the average life expectancy (approximately three generations or 73 years in the U.S.) for a reduction in fertility to be manifested as a change in actual population numbers.¹⁴

The second, and much more significant reason is because of high levels of *mass immigration* into the United States.

In 1997, the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences projected that, of the 124 million people added to the U.S. population between 1995 and 2050, "80 million [65 percent] will be the direct or indirect consequence of immigration." The NRC stated unequivocally, "Immigration, then, will obviously play the dominant role in our future population growth."¹⁵

Then in 2015, the Pew Research Center produced a new projection, stating that "population projections show that if current demographic trends continue, future immigrants and their descendants will be an even bigger source of population growth. Between 2015 and 2065, they are projected to account for 88 percent of the U.S. population increase, or 103 million people, as the nation grows to 441 million."¹⁵

America's population at the time of this writing is 329 million, with growth of about 2.3 million every year. Immigration remains the main driving force behind America's population growth.

RETREAT FROM POPULATION STABILIZATION

Unfortunately, the immigration-population-environment connection is now discounted by Congress, environmental organizations, and the media.

The article, "Forsaking Fundamentals" presents 5 essential reasons why this has occurred.⁴ Excerpts from the article are included below:

1. Dropping Fertility. By 1972... many Americans, including environmentalists, apparently confused “replacement-level” fertility with ZPG [zero population growth], and mistakenly concluded that the overpopulation problem was solved....

2. Anti-Abortion Politics. To the Catholic hierarchy and the pro-life movement, the legalized abortion and population stabilization causes have been inextricably linked....

3. Women’s Issues Separate Population Groups from Environmental Issues.... as environmentalists abandoned population issues in the 1970s, the population groups more and more de-emphasized environmental motives in favor of feminist motives....

4. Rift Between Conservationist and New-Left Roots.... A third root of modern environmentalism is much younger. It emerged only in the 1960s and was an outgrowth of what was called New-Left politics. It came to focus more on urban and health issues such as air, water, and toxic contamination, especially as they related to race, poverty, and the defects of capitalism. The “Environmental Justice” movement and Green political parties grew out of this root. The leaders of this root have always forcefully downplayed the role of population growth as a cause of environmental problems....

5. Immigration Becomes Chief Growth Factor. Modifications to immigration law in 1965 inadvertently set in motion an increase in immigration through extended family members that began to snowball during the 1970s. [Thus, immigration plus births to immigrants became the significant factor in U.S. population growth.]

At the same time that American fertility declines were beginning to put population stabilization within reach, immigration was rising rapidly to three or four times traditional levels. During the first decade, some groups directly advocated that immigration numbers be set at a level consistent with U.S. environmental needs. The following are reasons why that advocacy ceased:

- Fear that immigration reduction would alienate “progressive” allies and be seen as racially insensitive....
- The transformation of population and the environment into global issues needing global solutions....
- Influence of human rights organizations....
- Triumph of the ethics of globalism over ethics of nationalism/internationalism....

- Fear of demographic trends. Some environmental leaders express fear that if they are perceived as “anti-immigrant,” a backlash against environmentalists could develop....

ENVIRONMENTAL ABOUT-FACE

The Sierra Club and most other mainstream conservation organizations once shared the understanding that U.S. population growth negatively impacted environmental quality. Dave Brower, former executive director of the Sierra Club, expressed this consensus view in 1966 when he said, “We feel you don’t have a conservation policy unless you have a population policy.”¹⁶

Sierra Club population policy stated:

“We must find, encourage, and implement at the earliest possible time the necessary policies, attitudes, social standards, and actions that will...bring about the stabilization of the population first of the United States and then of the world.” Adopted June 4, 1970; amended July 8, 1995.

“Immigration to the U.S. should be no greater than that which will permit achievement of population stabilization in the U.S.... The Sierra Club will lend its voice to the congressional debate on legal immigration issues when appropriate, and then only on the issue of the number of immigrants — not where they come from or their category, since it is the fact of increasing numbers that affects population growth and ultimately, the quality of the environment.” Confirmed July, 1988.¹⁷

The Sierra Club was unable to consistently advocate measures to reduce immigration levels as required to stabilize population. The reason why was initially unknown.

Then on October 27, 2004, the *Los Angeles Times* revealed the answer: David Gelbaum, a wealthy donor, had demanded a “neutrality” position from the Sierra Club in return for huge donations. Kenneth Weiss, author of the *LA Times* article that broke the story, quoted what David Gelbaum said to Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope:

I did tell Carl Pope in 1994 or 1995 that if they ever came out anti-immigration, they would never get a dollar from me.

That stance was a great pity. As the *Times* article made clear, Gelbaum has been one of the most generous individual donors to conservation causes in the U.S. Yet all of those causes continue to be threatened, directly or indirectly, by immigration-driven population growth. At an emotional level, Gelbaum’s stance is understandable. His wife is Mexican-American, and his grandfa-

ther immigrated to the U.S. after fleeing persecution of Jews in the Ukraine.

In 1996 and again in 1998, the Club's leaders proved their loyalty to Gelbaum's position on immigration, first by enacting a policy of neutrality on immigration and then by aggressively opposing a member initiative to overturn that policy. In 2000 and 2001, Gelbaum rewarded the Club with total donations to the Sierra Club Foundation exceeding \$100 million.¹⁸ In principle, a wiser and less ideological Sierra Club leadership could have persuaded Gelbaum that a call for return to more moderate immigration levels was not "anti-immigration" or "anti-immigrant" in any way. But such leadership was not in place.

Once the Sierra Club fled from dealing with the immigration component of U.S. population growth, other environmental organizations followed suit, including the National Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, the Izaak Walton League, and The Wilderness Society.

Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson — the founder of Earth Day and, arguably, the leading environmentalist in Congress during his 18 years as a Senator — was a counselor for The Wilderness Society after he retired from Congress. Nelson was a strong proponent of population stabilization, and, while he was its counselor, a strong population statement appeared on the website of The Wilderness Society. Soon after Nelson died the statement disappeared, never to reappear.

SUSPS INITIATIVE AND BOARD CANDIDATES

SUSPS was formed in 1996 after the Sierra Club reversed its 30-year comprehensive population policy, which addressed the impacts of both fertility and mass migration on U.S. population growth. SUSPS actively participated in the Sierra Club during the period from 1996 to 2005. SUSPS proposed a resolution to Club membership in 1998 that called for adoption of:

... a comprehensive population policy for the United States that continues to advocate an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths), but now also through reduction in net immigration (immigration minus emigration)¹⁹

The initiative was endorsed by more than forty national conservation leaders and received a 40 percent vote from the membership.²⁰

In 2001, the Sierra Club made curbing sprawl a national priority campaign. Yet the campaign scarcely mentioned population growth as a causative factor of sprawl — with its related environmental consequences.

Studies had revealed that most sprawl is tightly linked to population growth. The Nature Conservancy's comprehensive book *Precious Heritage* showed a high correlation between areas with U.S. endangered species and areas with population-driven sprawl, including California, the Southwest, and Florida.²¹

SUSPS therefore proposed a resolution to Sierra Club members to "emphasize both regional and national population stabilization as essential components in all Sierra Club sprawl materials and programs."²²

SUSPS also endorsed candidates for election to the Club's board of directors — three of whom in total were elected in 2002 and 2003.²³

THE TESTIMONY AND SUBCOMMITTEE

In 2001, SUSPS was invited by Congress to present testimony on immigration and the U.S. "population boom" to the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims. The full record of the hearing is available on the House of Representatives website, and it is interesting indeed to read the shorter, more informal verbal testimony of the witnesses and their exchanges with subcommittee members.²⁴ Representatives of three other organizations testified in the same session: John F. Long, Chief of the Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau; Jeffrey S. Passel, Population Studies Center, The Urban Institute; and Steven A. Camarota, Center for Immigration Studies.

Members of the subcommittee were George W. Gekas, Pennsylvania, Chairman; Darrell E. Issa, California; Melissa A. Hart, Pennsylvania; Lamar Smith, Texas; Elton Gallegly, California; Chris Cannon, Utah; Vice Chair; Jeff Flake, Arizona; Sheila Jackson Lee, Texas; Barney Frank, Massachusetts; Howard L. Berman, California; Zoe Lofgren, California; and Martin T. Meehan, Massachusetts.

SUSPS members William G. Elder, Fred Elbel, Dick Schneider, and Ben Zuckerman participated in drafting our SUSPS testimony, and William G. Elder made the actual presentation in Washington, D.C., on August 2, 2001.

Chairman Gekas opened the session with these words:

Today's testimony is mostly about numbers. I have never been a good student of numbers or an expert at it, but some of these numbers should be very important in the daily reckoning of every American citizen as to the future of each family and to the future of the Nation. We are talking about the number of immigrants that are now extant in the land where the latest count seems to be about 28 million. That, ladies and gentlemen, constitutes 10 percent of the entire population of the Nation, more

or less. And it denotes that since 1990, there has been a vaulting of expectations on the part of the numbers of immigrants and it has brought about the attendant problems that we in this Committee and in the Congress generally and in the populace of the Nation readily perceive. What we are going to do today is to listen to what I anticipate is to be very valid and very poignant testimony on the numbers, the problems that they cause, what we can do about the numbers, and what we can expect, pro and con, from the rising numbers about which we speak. And the policy yet to be fully formulated for immigration in the next decade and more, that is left for us yet to mold, but we are going to do it and the testimony that we are going to hear today, I venture to say, would be important in every deliberation we undertake between now and the actual passage of legislation dealing with a long-term immigration policy.

Gekas gave this introduction of Elder to the sub-committee:

Dr. William Elder... is Chairman of the Sierans for U.S. Population Stabilization. The acronym is SUSPS. That is it. That is the toughest one I have had to pronounce since I have been Chairman. A faction of the Sierra Club. Mr. Elder has studied population sprawl, growth management in the environment for 10 years. He has been a member of the Sierra Club since 1994. He is also the founder and managing director of Alternatives for Growth Washington, a start-up nonprofit organization which seeks to leave a better and sustainable quality of life to succeeding generations of Washingtonians. Mr. Elder has also worked in the health care industry for 30 years.

The SUSPS testimony follows on page 12. ■

Endnotes

1. *The Social Contract* is a quarterly that examines trends, events, and ideas that have an impact on America's delicate social fabric, including human population issues, absolute size, rate of growth, and distribution, as well as immigration and related cultural issues.

https://www.thesocialcontract.com/info/about_the_social_contract.html

2. Philip Cafaro, *How Many Is Too Many?: The Progressive Argument for Reducing Immigration into the United States*, Chicago Studies in American Politics, 2015.

Philip Cafaro and Eileen Crist, Eds., *Life on the Brink: Environmentalists Confront Overpopulation*, University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Dave Foreman, *Man Swarm: and the Killing of Wildlife*, Ravens Eye Press LLC, 2011.

Jenny Goldie (Ed.), Katharine Betts, *Sustainable Futures: Linking Population, Resources and the Environment*, CSIRO Publishing, 2015.

Edward C. Hartman, *The Population Fix*, Think Population Press, 2006.

Karen I. Shragg, *Move Upstream: A Call to Solve Overpopulation*, Freethought House, 2015.

Carol M. Swain, Ed., *Debating Immigration*, 2d edition, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018.

Alon Tal, *The Land Is Full: Addressing Overpopulation in Israel*, Yale University Press, 2016.

Alan Weisman, *Countdown: Our Last, Best Hope for a Future on Earth?*, Little, Brown and Company, 2013.

A compilation of older books on population is included at: "Books on Overpopulation," EcoFuture, 2002.

https://www.ecofuture.org/pop/books_pop.html

3. Paul R. Ehrlich and John P. Holdren, "Impact of Population Growth," *Science*, 171, pp. 1212-1217, 1971.

Paul R. Ehrlich and John P. Holdren, "A Bulletin dialogue on 'The Closing Circle': critique," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 28, pp. 16, 18 & 27, 1972.

4. Leon Kolankiewicz and Roy Beck, "Forsaking Fundamentals — The Environmental Establishment Abandons U.S. Population Stabilization," *Center for Immigration Studies*, April 2001.

<https://cis.org/Report/Forsaking-Fundamentals>

<https://www.cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/articles/2001/forsaking/forsaking.pdf>

The shorter original version was published as:

"The Environmental Movement's Retreat from Advocating U.S. Population Stabilization (1970 - 1998): A First Draft of History," by Roy Beck and Leon Kolankiewicz, *Journal of Policy History*, (ISSN 0898-0306) Vol 12, No 1, 2000, Pennsylvania State University.

It is also available online:

<https://www.numbersusa.com/PDFs/Retreat2.pdf>

5. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), enacted in 1970.

<https://ceq.doe.gov/>

Endangered Species Act, enacted in 1973.

<https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-endangered-species-act>

Clean Air Act, enacted in 1970.

<https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-air-act>

Clean Water Act, enacted in 1972.

<https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act>

6. “Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,” Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctic_National_Wildlife_Refuge

“The Story of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act,” Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

<https://suwa.org/issues/arrwa/the-story-of-americas-red-rock-wilderness-act>

7. “The Historical Roots of NEPA,” R. B. Smythe. 1997. At p. 12 in Ray Clark and Larry Canter (eds.) *Environmental Policy and NEPA: Past, Present, and Future*. Boca Raton: St. Lucie Press.

8. 42 U.S.C. 4331.

9. Rockefeller: Cited in David Simcox, “The Commission on Population Growth and the American Future: Twenty Years Later: A Lost Opportunity,” in *The Social Contract*, Summer 1992: p. 197.

<https://www.thesocialcontract.com/artman2/publish/tsc0204/index.shtml>

“Population and the American Future,” Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. 1972. U.S. Government Printing Office. Excerpt above from transmittal letter.

“Summary of commission recommendations,” Dieoff.org.

<http://www.dieoff.org/page73.htm>

“U.S. Immigration, Population Growth, and the Environment,” SUSPS.

<https://www.susps.org/overview/immigration.html>

10. *Select Commission on Immigration Policy and the National Interest*. 1981. U.S. Government Printing Office.

11. “U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (Barbara Jordan Commission),” NumbersUSA, April 5, 2010.

<https://www.numbersusa.com/content/learn/illegal-immigration/us-commission-immigration-reform-barbara-jordan-commission.html>

“Clinton Embraces a Proposal to Cut Immigration by a Third,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 1995.

12. “Barbara Jordan’s Vision of Immigration Reform,” NumbersUSA, October 7, 2015.

<https://www.numbersusa.com/resource-article/barbara-jordans-vision-immigration-reform>

13. “President’s Council on Sustainable Development. Sustainable America: A New Consensus for Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment,” U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 12. Quote from p. 21, 1996.

<https://clintonwhitehouse2.archives.gov/PCSD/>

Introduction to the report:

https://clintonwhitehouse2.archives.gov/PCSD/Publications/TF_Reports/pop-intr.html

14. *Ecoscience: Population, Resources, Environment*, Ehrlich and Holdren, W.H. Freeman & Co. San Francisco, 1977, Chapter 4, pp. 109-110.

15. “Population Clock,” United States Census Bureau. U.S. population was 329,040,078 as of November 22, 2018.

<https://census.gov/en.html>

National Research Council, “The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration,” The National Academies Press, Washington, DC, p. 95, 1997.

<https://doi.org/10.17226/5779>

“Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065,” Pew Research Center, Overview, p. 6, September 28, 2015.

http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/09/2015-09-28_modern-immigration-wave_REPORT.pdf

16. Stewart L. Udall, 1963, in *The Quiet Crisis and the Next Generation*. Peregrine Smith Books. p. 239, 1988.

17. “A Brief History of Sierra Club Population Policy — Sierra Club Population Policy Excerpts,” SUSPS.

<https://www.susps.org/history/brief.html>

18. SUSPS, originally known as Sierrans™ for US Population Stabilization.

<https://www.susps.org/>

Kenneth R. Weiss, “The Man Behind the Land,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2004

<http://articles.latimes.com/2004/oct/27/local/me-donor27>

19. “Sierra Club 1998 Population Ballot Questions,” SUSPS.

https://www.susps.org/ibq1998/ballot_quest.html

20. “Endorsers of the 1998 ‘A’ Ballot Question,” SUSPS.

<https://www.susps.org/ibq1998/endorsers.html>

21. *Precious Heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the United States*, The Nature Conservancy and the Association for Biodiversity Information, Oxford University Press, 2000.

22. “Sprawl, population growth, and the Sierra Club,” SUSPS, 2001.

https://www.susps.org/sprawl/sb1_sbq.html

“Sprawl City,” website archived at archive.org, November, 2001.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20011127055520/http://www.sprawlcity.org:80/>

“Most U.S. population growth is now the result of federal actions that over the last four decades have quadrupled annual numbers of residents moving into U.S. cities from other countries. The Census Bureau states that if the government continues these current levels, America’s communities will have to expand to accommodate nearly 300 million additional people this century.”

Bruce A. Stein, Lynn S. Kutner, Jonathan S. Adams (Eds.), *Precious Heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the United States*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

23. “Sierra Club Yearly Election Results,” SUSPS. Doug LaFollette, Paul Watson, and Ben Zuckerman were elected to the Board in 2002 and 2003.

https://www.susps.org/info/election_results.html

24. U.S. Population and Immigration Hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, August 2, 2001.

http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/judiciary/hju74238.000/hju74238_of.htm

The United States Population and Immigration

Testimony to the 107th Congress of the United States, House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, August 2, 2001

INTRODUCTION

My name is Bill (William G.) Elder. I am chairperson of a network of Sierra Club members that has been commonly referred to as Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization or SUSPS. Based on past election results, we represent the views of more than 40 percent of the nearly 700,000 members of the Sierra Club.

I am testifying on behalf of this network of club members. I am not representing the Sierra Club or speaking in my capacity as Population Issue Coordinator of the club’s Cascade Chapter.

We thank the Subcommittee for this opportunity to share our views with you — and would like to summarize them briefly before going into more detail.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The invitation we received indicated the purpose of this hearing is “...to examine the relationship between immigration and the population boom that the U.S. is experiencing.” The use of the term “population boom” is absolutely correct. Our 1990-2000 growth of 32.7 million exceeds that of any other census decade in our nation’s history — including the 1960-70 peak of the “baby boom” (28.4 million) and the mass immigration period of 1900-10 (16.3 million).

While some economic interests welcome the short-term profits of population booms, we do not. Looking ahead, we see long-term environmental and economic disaster for our country. We’ve already lost 95 percent of the old growth forests and 50 percent of the wetlands of this nation. We have grown well beyond the energy

supply within our borders. Water supplies are declining.

Whether the issue is sprawl, endangered species, wetlands, clean air and water, forest or wilderness preservation — the environmental (and quality of life) impact of adding 33 million people per decade is extremely harmful. It is the equivalent of shoehorning another state the size of California — including all its homes, office buildings, shopping centers, schools and churches, freeways, power, water and food consumption, and waste products — into an already crowded and stressed U.S. environment. And not just doing it once, but then over and over, decade after decade after decade.

The role of immigration in this population boom is crucial. At least 60 percent of our population growth in the ’90s (20 million) was from immigration and children born to immigrants. Some put the figure higher, at 70 percent. With no change in immigration legislation, this growth will continue unabated and constitute the sole cause of population growth in the U.S. as the momentum and “echoes” of the baby boom fades away. The Census Bureau projects that unless current trends are changed, U.S. population will double within the lifetime of today’s children.

The American people did their part to solve the environmental problems presented by the baby boom. We voluntarily adopted replacement level reproduction averaging two births per woman (although this is still high compared to 1.4 in other developed nations). We have also made some “gains” — albeit very limited — in reducing consumption per capita in areas such as electric power and use of lower polluting technologies.

But Congress, intentionally or not, has completely undone this sacrifice of the American people and our

progress towards a stable and sustainable population by creating an “immigration boom.” Immigration that averaged about two million per decade over the history of our nation has been expanded four fold by various acts of Congress beginning in 1965. (Since about two million people now leave the U.S. per decade, immigration of this traditional level would represent replacement level immigration.)

This new population boom must be addressed, not only for the sake of the quality of environment and life we pass to future generations of Americans, but also to be responsible to the citizens of the rest of the world who should not have to bear the burden of ever increasing resource consumption of our country.

We urge Congress to enact a comprehensive population policy for the United States that includes an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths) and net immigration (immigration minus emigration).

BACKGROUND: WHY CONSERVATIONISTS/ ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT POPULATION

The environmental movement has been guided by the following fundamental formula for years. Environmental damage or loss of a natural resource equals:

- increase in population
- multiplied by consumption per capita
- multiplied by waste/harmful effects per unit of production.

Taking electric power as an example — if U.S. population increases 13 percent (as it did last decade), consumption per capita remains unchanged, and we have to add natural gas and coal fired power plants to accommodate the growth at say a 2 percent increase in air pollution per megawatt produced – we will suffer a 15 percent increase in air pollution. Put another way, to do no additional harm to air quality, all of our businesses and people would need to reduce their use of power by 15 percent. And then, do so again and again if Congress allows population growth to continue unabated in future decades.

Of course, as environmentalists, we think people are entitled to cleaner air (water that we can swim and fish in, etc.), not just the same quality we have now. We also think that many Americans will make sacrifices to accomplish such goals. But we do not think Americans will respond to the call to conserve — only to see the fruits of their sacrifice eaten up by government sponsored population growth.

Taking a longer term view, the U.S. is the third most populated country in the world. With our de facto

“growth forever” population policy we are headed in the same direction as the first two — China and India. (The U.S. could hit a billion persons within about 100 years, according to some Census Bureau scenarios.) We see the environmental damage these countries have experienced with only a fraction of the consumption per capita of the U.S. and find this vision of America very sobering.

THE SIERRA CLUB ITSELF RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO STABILIZE U.S. POPULATION BECAUSE THE U.S. POPULATION IS NOT ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE

The Sierra Club has been calling for stabilizing U.S. population for over 30 years. In 1999, the club’s board of directors went even further by calling for reduction in U.S. population, stating: “The Board clarified that Sierra Club favors an eventual decline in U.S. population, since the population has already reached levels that are not environmentally sustainable.”

(see www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/population.asp and www.sierraclub.org/population/faq.asp)

A 1989 report published by the club’s Population Committee summarized the club’s traditional position on the environmental damage caused by U.S. population growth and also identified the need to address immigration:

The Sierra Club has long supported the idea that an end to population growth in the U.S. and each country around the world is essential to environmental protection. In particular, Club policy calls for “development by the federal government of a population policy for the United States” and for the U.S. “to end (its) population growth as soon as feasible.”

The U.S. population continues to increase by about two and a half million people a year, the result of an excess of births plus in-migrants over deaths plus out-migrants. While population growth rates in less-developed countries are larger, America’s numbers and growth have a disproportionate impact on the environment, on natural resources, on global warming, on air and water pollution.

Since 1981 the Club has supported and testified in favor of bills in the House and Senate that would declare population stabilization to be the goal of the country, and that would call for the preparation of an explicit population policy that leads to the achievement of population stabilization. The motto, “Stop At Two” (children), was easily achieved in the 1970s, as average family size in the U.S. dropped below 2 children per woman. Yet

this proved insufficient to achieve stabilization due to substantial immigration. The Club never clarified its policy to indicate what specific family size and immigration levels would achieve this goal. This lack of clarity placed the Club in an awkward position, calling for a policy but unable to explain what that policy should be!

The Club's Population Committee began discussing this issue at its April 1988 meeting, taking advantage of the then-newly-released set of Census Bureau population projections that, for the first time, examined the effect of alternative combinations of both fertility and migration. The result of the committee's discussions was an interpretation of Club policy to cover immigration, the first time the Club has dealt with this issue in a quantitative way: Immigration to the U.S. should be no greater than that which will permit achievement of population stabilization in the U.S. This interpretation was confirmed by the Club's Conservation Coordinating Committee this past July [1988].

SIERRANS FOR U.S. POPULATION STABILIZATION URGES CONGRESS TO REDUCE OVERALL IMMIGRATION NUMBERS AS NEEDED TO STABILIZE OUR POPULATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

A large number of Sierra Club members feel very strongly that to be environmentally responsible, we must address immigration levels because there is no hope of stabilizing our population at anything approaching a sustainable level without doing so. We have continued in our efforts as individuals despite the neutrality policy on immigration adopted by the Sierra Club Board of Directors in 1996: ("The Sierra Club, its entities, and those speaking in its name will take no position on immigration levels or on policies governing immigration into the United States.")

We (SUSPS) recognize that although different reasons may be given to INS, most people move to the U.S. for economic opportunity and the American style of life and consumption. So there will be immigration pressure unless all countries "achieve" the same level of consumption as the U.S. (which would require two and a half Earths' worth of resources, according to some) or U.S. consumption decreases to those of developing countries. Neither alternative is realistic in the foreseeable future.

As the National Academy of Sciences stated in July 1997: "As long as there is a virtually unlimited supply of potential immigrants, the nation must make choices on how many to admit."

Many other environmentalists support the SUSPS position of balancing both reproduction and immigration to reach a stable and sustainable population level in the U.S.

The following individuals endorsed our position that a comprehensive population policy for the United States needs to be adopted that includes an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths) and net immigration (immigration minus emigration).

- **Al Bartlett**, Professor Emeritus of Physics, University of Colorado, Boulder
- **Anthony Beilenson**, U.S. Congressman 1977-1996; 100 percent from League of Conservation Voters; Congressional leader for international family planning
- **John R. Bermingham**, ZPG Board member, President Colorado Population Coalition
- **Nicholaas Bloembergen**, Nobel Laureate, Harvard University
- **Lester Brown**, co-founder and President, Worldwatch Institute; co-author *State of the World* series
- **William R. Catton, Jr.**, Professor Emeritus, Washington State University, author *Overshoot - The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*
- **Maria Hsia Chang**, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Nevada, Reno
- **Benny Chien**, Past President, Californians for Population Stabilization; U.C. San Diego School of Medicine
- **Herman Daly**, co-founder International Society for Ecological Economics; co-author *For the Common Good*
- **Elaine del Castillo**, founder, Save Our Earth
- **Brock Evans**, Executive Director, Endangered Species Coalition; former Sierra Club Associate Executive Director; former Vice-President Audubon Society; former Sierra Club director; John Muir Award (read his statement at <http://www.susps.org/discuss/evans.html>)
- **Dave Foreman**, co-founder Earth First!; former National Sierra Club Director (read his statement at http://www.susps.org/opinion/foreman_9802.html)
- **Lindsey Grant**, author, *Juggernaut*; former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment and Population Affairs

- **Dorothy Green**, founding President, Heal the Bay; President Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council
- **Marilyn Hempel**, Executive Director, Population Coalition
- **Huey D. Johnson**, former Secretary of Resources, State of California; President, Resource Renewal Institute
- **George Kennan**, former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union; Presidential Medal of Freedom; Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton
- **Doug La Follette**, Wisconsin Secretary of State; Board Member, Friends of the Earth
- **Martin Litton**, former National Sierra Club Director; John Muir Award; former senior editor Sunset magazine (read his statement There They Go Again at http://www.susps.org/opinion/litton_9801.html)
- **Jan Lundberg**, President of Fossil Fuels Policy Action
- **Dan Luten**, past President Friends of the Earth; author, *Progress Against Growth*
- **Tom McMahon**, former Executive Director Californians for Population Stabilization
- **Monique Miller**, Executive Director, Wild Earth magazine
- **Frank Morris, Sr.**, former Executive Director, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
- **Farley Mowat**, author, *Never Cry Wolf, A Whale for the Killing, Sea of Slaughter*
- **Norman Myers**, Senior Advisor, United Nations Population Fund; Senior Fellow, World Wildlife Fund
- **Gaylord Nelson**, founder Earth Day; U.S. Senator 1963-81; sponsor, Wilderness Act; Presidential Medal of Freedom
- **Tim Palmer**, river conservationist; author, *California's Threatened Environment*
- **Dr. David Pimentel**, Professor of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University
- **Marcia Pimentel**, Senior Lecturer (ret.) Nutritional Science, Cornell University, author
- **Charles Remington**, co-founder Zero Population Growth; Professor of Forestry, Environmental Science and Biology, Yale University
- **John F. Rohe**, author, *A Bicentennial Malthusian Essay*
- **Galen Rowell**, nature photographer and

author, *Mountain Light, Bay Area Wild, The Vertical World of Yosemite*

- **Claudine Schneider**, U.S. Congress, 1980-90; champion of biodiversity, tropical rainforests, and endangered species
- **Maria Sepulveda**, Executive Director, Population-Environment Balance
- **George Sessions**, Professor of Philosophy, Sierra College; author, *Deep Ecology* and *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*
- **Beth Curry Thomas**, Sierra Club National Population Committee; founder, Planned Parenthood, Hilton Head, South Carolina
- **Stewart Udall**, Secretary of the Interior 1961-69; Counselor Grand Canyon Trust; author, *The Quiet Crisis*
- **Casey Walker**, Publisher, *Wild Duck Review*
- **Paul Watson**, co-founder Greenpeace; founder and President Sea Shepherd Conservation Society
- **Carole Wilmoth**, Past President Audubon Council of Texas
- **E.O. Wilson**, Conservation Biologist, Harvard University; author, *Diversity of Life Affiliations for identification purposes only*

Among other environmental organizations, the Wilderness Society has exhibited the foresight and responsibility of adopting a U.S. population policy that calls for addressing immigration as part of achieving a stable population. As stated by the chairman of President Clinton's Population and Consumption Task Force: "We believe that reducing current immigration levels is a necessary part of working toward sustainability in the United States."

MYTHS PROPAGATED BY OTHERS TO MISLEAD THE PUBLIC AND POLICY MAKERS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN U.S. POPULATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT NEED TO BE RECOGNIZED AS SUCH

One myth we hear often is that population is a global problem and we should only address it globally. Of course overpopulation is a global problem. But it is also a national problem in China, India, the U.S., and many other countries. We do live in one world, but borders and governments are relevant. We make decisions as nations, and will continue to do so. The U.S. government and people have a responsibility to be willing to stabilize our population, just as we need to look to the people and governments of China, India, et al., to do the same.

A second common myth is that the number of immigrants doesn't affect the U.S. environment because they are poor, live in inner cities, and take the bus etc. So, they don't consume, participate in sprawl, or clog the roads and pollute the air like everyone else.

This stereotyping of immigrants is inappropriate. Many people who move to the U.S. are not poor. They live in the suburbs and consume at American levels just like anyone else. Secondly, to the extent that some immigrants are lower income, they and their children aspire to the American standard of living and consumption, and generally achieve it in the second generation if not the first. In this respect lower income immigrants have a similar effect to that of births. Babies don't consume a lot either — but by the time they are young adults they certainly do.

CONCLUSION

Respected organizations such as the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society and many environmental leaders recognize that continued growth in U.S. population and our consumption is decimating the natural resources that we and future generations need to live healthy and satisfying lives. Open space, forests, wetlands, water availability, air quality, and endangered animal species are continually lost to satisfy the demands of a burgeoning human population. As responsible citizens of the U.S. we must act now on this issue that has such far reaching and serious consequences for future generations as well as ourselves.

We urge Congress to enact a comprehensive population policy for the United States that includes an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths) and net immigration (immigration minus emigration)....

Sierrans for U.S. Population Stabilization is a network of members of the Sierra Club numbering in the thousands. We are guided by a steering committee consisting of long-time Sierra Club members.

We are concerned about the natural world being left to future generations at home and abroad. As with all priority Sierra Club programs, the first responsibility is to solve a U.S. problem, in this case that of U.S. population growth and consumption in accordance with "think globally, act locally." Although we are aware the U.S. is

part of a world community, we also recognize the Club's relatively limited influence abroad.

We believe a comprehensive U.S. population policy must be a part of the Club's Global Population Program [for stabilizing world population]. We support a return to 1970-1996 Sierra Club U.S. population policy that advocates zero population growth, where births equal deaths and immigration equals emigration, or any reasonable combination that will achieve U.S. population stabilization as quickly as possible.

We reaffirm the 1970 Sierra Club policy "That we must find, encourage, and implement at the earliest possible time the necessary policies, attitudes, social standards, and actions that will, by voluntary and humane means consistent with human rights and individual conscience, bring about the stabilization of the population first of the United States and then of the world." (Sierra Club Board of Directors, 1970)

Our concern is with total numbers, not with any group or country of origin. We argue for an end to U.S. growth in numbers and consumption simply based on environmental limits. We advocate any reasonable combination of natural increase and immigration that can achieve a sustainable U.S. population.

As conservationists and loyal members, we work within the Sierra Club, advocating that it must:

- Pro-actively inform, promote, and lobby to support policies and programs to end U.S. population growth.
- Explicitly recognize rapid U.S. population growth among the causes of sprawl.
- Fully support other organizations and programs focused on U.S. population stabilization.
- Support reduction of consumption, especially in the U.S. and other high-consuming societies. Ending U.S. population growth in no way forecloses efforts to reduce U.S. consumption. Both are necessary as stated by the President's Council on Sustainable Development (1996).
- Support incentives that encourage family planning in the U.S. and worldwide.
- Support elimination of pro-natalist financial incentives.

Please see our website at www.SUSPS.org for additional information. ■

