



- By
- Karen I Shragg
- Dedicated in loving memory to
- Jane Goodall

Reaching Eco-dency by
Embracing Eco-history



Organism

A single individual



Population

Individuals of the same species in the same habitat



Community

Populations of several species in one habitat



Ecosystem

A habitat's community and its abiotic factors



Landscape

The patchwork of ecosystems across a large area



Biosphere

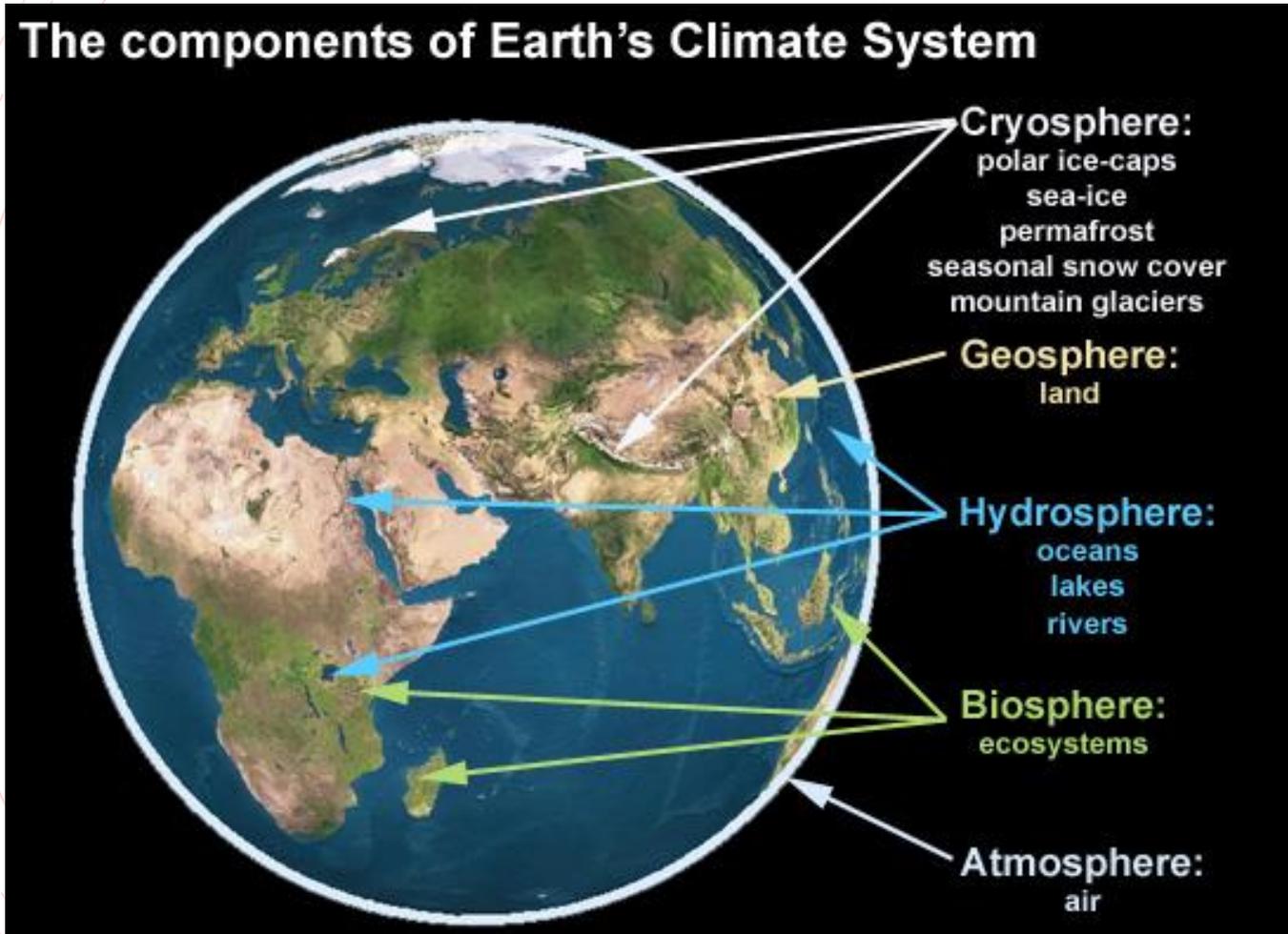
All landscapes inhabited by living organisms on Earth

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**Eco-Decency
Defined :**

Reaching a balance of treating our earth's systems and each other with the respect they need and deserve

Eco-history: Learn the complexity and fragility of the systems on which humans depend





Dignity for all species is the goal, only possible when we value each other,
our fellow species and the humble role we play on the earth

The Earth's Systems

Don't need us

WE need them to survive



8.25+ billion humans





The mess we find ourselves in can be attributed to two basic facts:

- We are not operating within nature's laws
- And we are not treating each other with decency or dignity

There can be no
dignity in an
Overpopulated
world



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The goal needs to be to act out of need not greed

But allowing our population to keep growing, means that even our basic needs are unsustainable.

There is also no
dignity under
oppressive
regimes



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In our trajectory from hunter gatherers to farmers to urbanized workers ,we lost our land ethic.



- Most of us live in cities now, (upwards of 50 U.S. metro areas have over 1 million people living in them) and with that move, we have lost our connection to the land, its limits and how to treat the land so that it could sustain us.
- To see what we have lost one only needs to look at intact native communities and their land practices.

Our disconnection leads us to operate with Short term vs Long term thinking

Convenience now, often has a price to pay later

Big picture thinking is required because we live in an overpopulated globalized world





Corporations
Make the Rules
and Reap the
Profits

- Billions in advertising dollars are spent each year convincing customers they need things
- National policy is directed around getting the raw materials needed to make all of new items including updated electronics
- Massive demand requires mass production which is unsustainable in itself
- Meanwhile billions of older cell phones end up in landfills leaching toxic waste
- (150 million in US/year)



We need a new story
which will promote dignity
on all fronts

- As Author and Historian Yuval Harari says, our wars have been based on imaginary stories
- We need to imagine new ones based on the earth's ecological cycles and an ethic of respect for each other

DIFFICULT CHOICES

Big picture thinking is required because we live in an overpopulated, globalized world



We must ask? What are the long-term effects if certain things catch on with billions demanding them?



EXAMPLE: When sushi became popular it pushed fish populations like tuna to the brink

One of the biggest challenge of Eco-decency : The good ideas of convenience often comes at an environmental price



- Flame retardant on furniture prevents fire hazards but is also toxic
- Plastic containers are safer but create havoc in our oceans
- Helmets are far more popular and save lives but they are made of plastic and end up in land fills



On a bigger scale, helping humanity today can create future problems which will hurt humanity

- Medical waste is a huge problem produced by our hospitals and clinics in efforts to help save lives.
- Sending food to starving nations without family planning support, allows for populations to grow in unsupportive environments setting up the conditions for more starvation in years to come.



When one product is touted as good for the environment we must look deeper

Electrifying the grid with no plans for downsizing demand is coming at a huge human and environmental cost

The Earth is struggling to accommodate us all
contrary to popular myth we are still growing by over 70 million each year on a planet that cannot sustain its 8.25 billion



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We are interdependent. Yet our overwhelming modernized presence is destroying the very ecosystems on which we depend.



- We have all sorts of anthropocentric systems in place to promote our well being on an ailing earth

We are disconnected
from our dependence
on insects, especially
bees



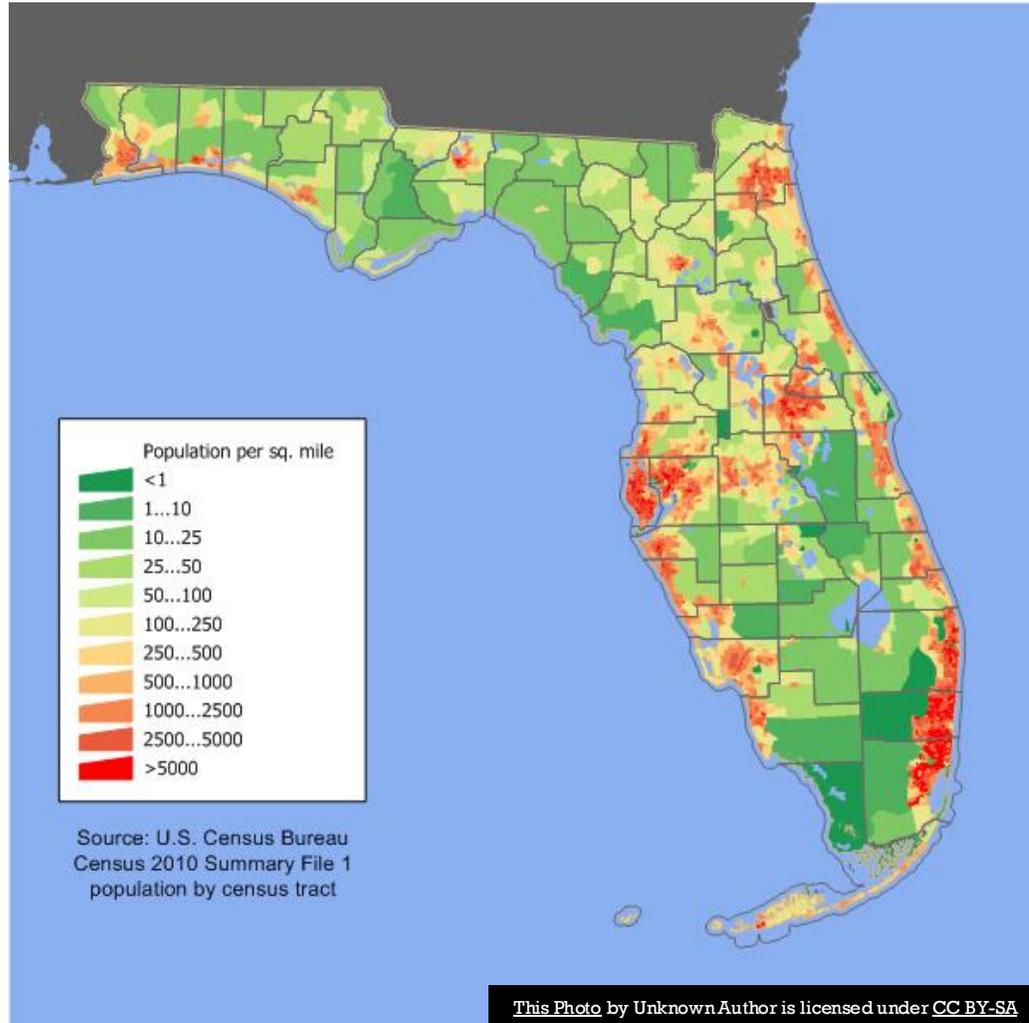


We are pushing off other species with our dominance

- With our numbers alone
- And our demand for food water, shelter and energy, we
- Are pushing out the other species
- Who have been here longer than we have

The background is a dense field of 3D-rendered numbers from 0 to 9. The numbers are arranged in a somewhat chaotic but rhythmic pattern, with some appearing in white and others in a vibrant orange. They have a strong sense of depth, casting shadows on the surface below them. In the center of the image, there is a thin, black, horizontally-oriented oval. Inside this oval, the text "We must know our numbers and realize their power" is written in a clean, black, sans-serif font, centered both horizontally and vertically within the oval.

We must know our numbers and realize
their power



How many know the population of their own state/province?

- Using 1970 (the first Earth Day) as a marker, where are your numbers now?
- Florida 1970: 6,789,443, Florida Today: **24,306,900**,
- Alberta :1.6 million in 1970
- Alberta Today :surpassed 5 million
- Resources cannot keep up with unrelenting demand



8,250,000,000 in the world
growing by over 70,000,000
US= 344,000,000 growing now
mostly by immigration

We must connect the debilitating dots between numbers and resources

Nature is made up of slow cycles of which we must have a fundamental understanding

Journalists and Political leaders need to be educated in eco-history and ask these deeper questions:

- **What is the relationship of large human populations to poverty and the suffering that accompanies the lack of adequate resources?**
- **What is the ideal population size for each country? How can we humanely stabilize and then reduce our numbers to prevent more suffering in the future?**



We should be hearing these questions debated on our news networks



- **What different kind of economic system would help us to slow our growth?**
- **How are human numbers and climate change connected?**
- **How can we better help those needing refuge while not increasing our already overpopulated country?**



THEORY:

When we understand on a deep level how the planet works, we can make better decisions



We must understand that technology will never lead us out of overconsumption

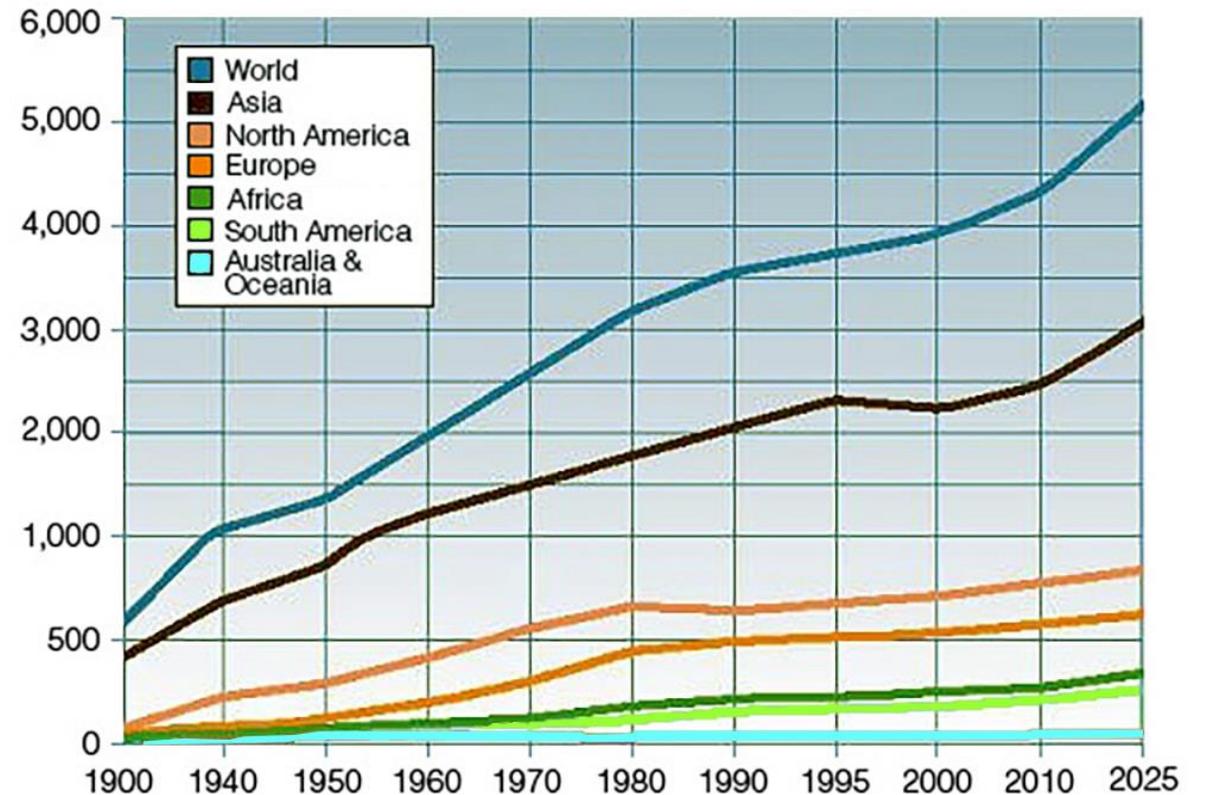


- Only in some circumstances can it buy us some time, but all technology takes energy and creates waste

If there were no conflicts in the world we still would be making more demands of resources than the planet can provide

Global Water Consumption 1900 – 2025

(by region, in billions of m³ per year)



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In Tehran Iran water shortages are looming

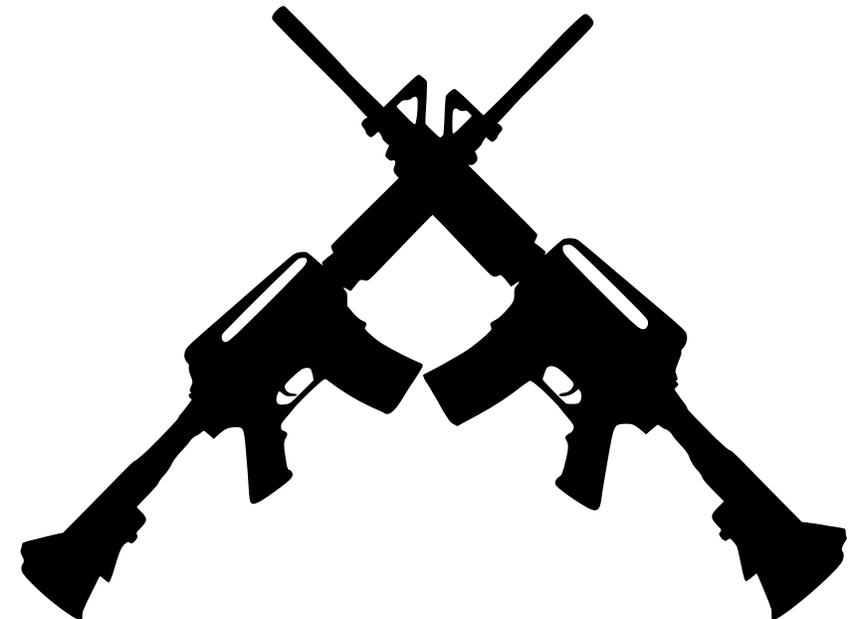
- The fact that their population has grown from 700,000 in the 1940's to 10 million today is largely to blame.

The effects of global climate change exacerbates the problem



But cruelty, violence and war has a devastating ecological cost as well as a human one

Violence is not only unethical
It makes huge unsustainable
demands of the earth
The US military is the world's
single largest institutional
consumer of oil and a major
user of other natural resources.



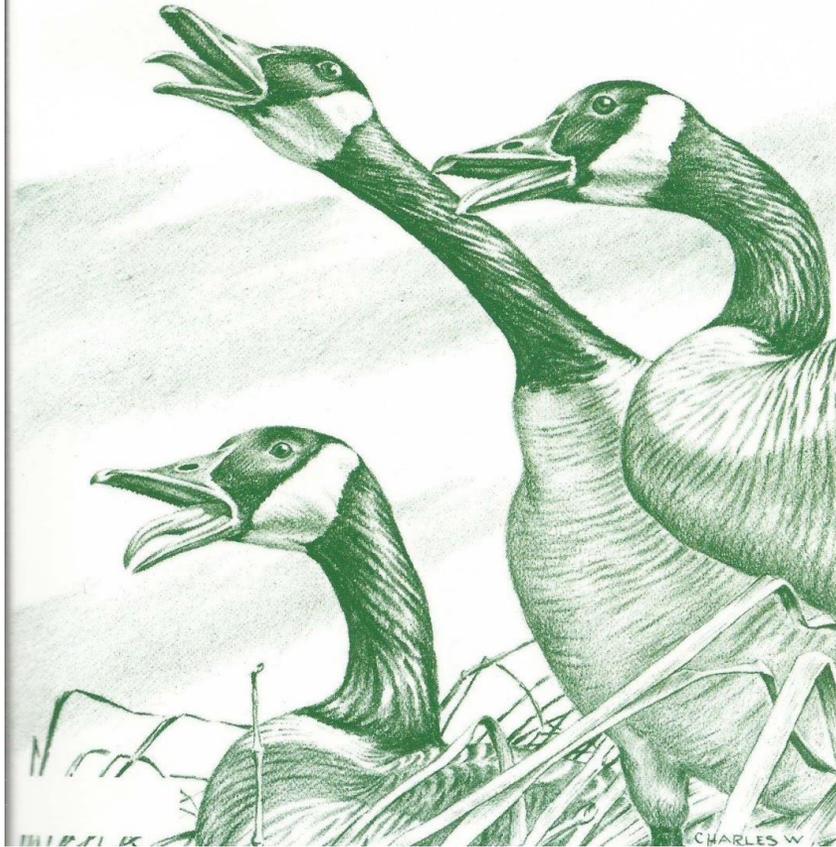


We all need a sustainable planet
There is no Planet B

Demanding Decency
and Sustainability
is the goal of
Eco-Decency

A Sand County ALMANAC

AND SKETCHES HERE AND THERE
By ALDO LEOPOLD



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In a 'Sand County Almanac' Aldo Leopold called for adopting a land ethic

this was the modern beginning of understanding that we must be more sustainable on the land



Jane Goodall embodied Ecodency

- Jane spoke of treating our planet like we all needed it and treating each other with kindness. She thought we were intellectual but not intelligent because of the way we are destroying our only home.



- Goodall wisely said: “..absurd really, to think that there can be unlimited economic development on a planet with finite natural resources,” and stressed that growing human populations contribute to the climate crisis.



Absurd indeed especially if one understands eco-history, yet the conflict between the Earth's needs and human needs are often at odds

Trying to balance these two goals is like walking a tightrope blindfolded between two mountain tops...

The Dignity Dilemma



Knitting together humane acts with ecological parameters is our greatest challenge for they are often conflicting.

- Decency includes :Curing disease, preventing accidents, ending wars
- But these are acts that decrease deaths and increase population if nothing is done on the birth side

Which increases population thereby exacerbating scarcity, poverty and suffering

We must not only
act in the present
moment but
consider the
future
ramifications of
our actions

- We learned the hard lessons of what happens to nature when we think we are doing the right thing by getting rid of the wolves in Yellowstone.
- We think we are making electricity when we build dams on rivers, but we are destroying salmon runs, essential for communities and wildlife habitat

WHY is India is now the most populated nation on the planet, exceeding China



- Historically high birth rates combined with an increase in medical care and reduction in diseases
- Resulting in more poverty as numbers overwhelm their systems on every level

Population momentum is not on their side. Family size has shrunk in many states, but the population is young and the numbers are baked into the system.

Still NGO's avoid discussing numbers when they offer locally-based short-term solutions

Each of us seeks the best opportunities for our families



We must have limits which are enforced and deal with unsustainable immigration demand both sustainably and fairly

We must never demonize, terrorize or kill those who we think may have committed the misdemeanor offense of being undocumented

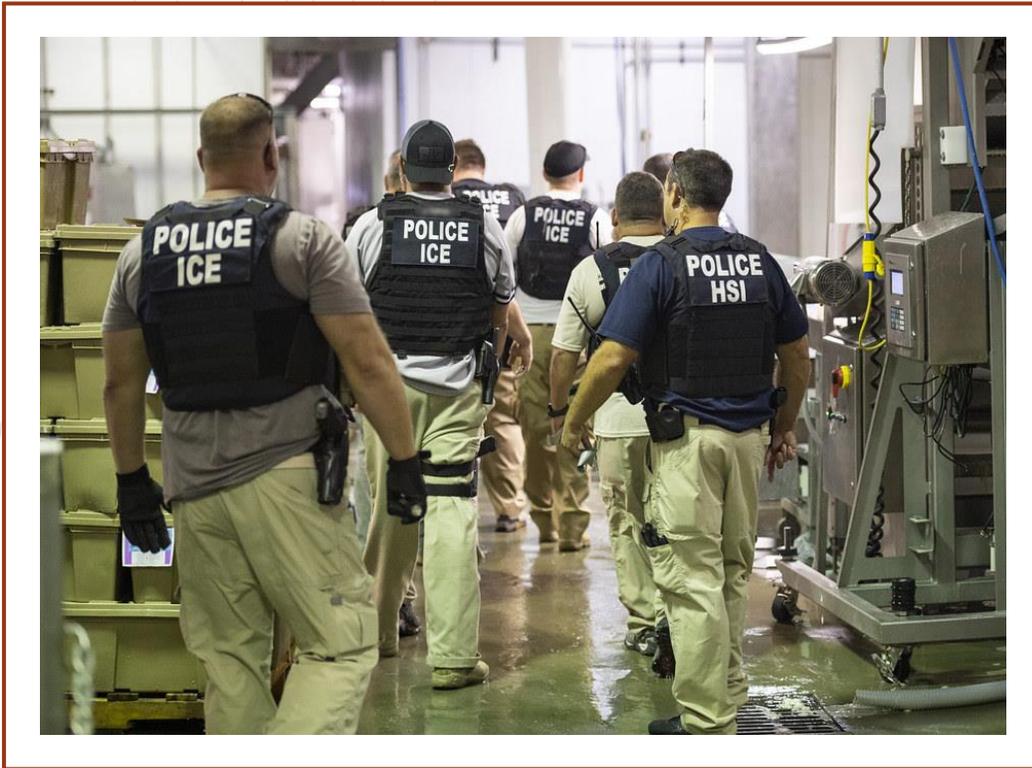
BUT Because the US and Canada's population growth is attributable mostly to immigration, we need to ask the right questions:



- How many is too many?
- How many high rises can be built in each aquifer especially with climate change? How much traffic, pollution is too much?

How can we address the human need with decency and respect without destroying our water and land resources, without destroying wildlife habitat, without adding to our traffic jams?

Yet the Trump administration has bypassed these critical questions and has been busy weaponizing immigration, distracting us from focusing on sustainable numbers



FUN FACT: 23 deaths have occurred by ICE since October 2025

- ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is scooping up people here legally who are in the process of gaining citizenship along with known criminals. They are responsible for the deaths of innocent people. 9 so far in 2026, several in my city.
- Trashing Habeus corpus and the law of the land which clearly gives vital protections against unlawful imprisonment and arbitrary government action, making sure that due process protects an individual's liberty
- These policies must be scrutinized for their lack of ecological integrity and human decency



It's a matter of scale

- Individuals must have real choices and realize how many people must change their behavior before any real change can be realized

Overpopulation
outweighs toning
down consumption

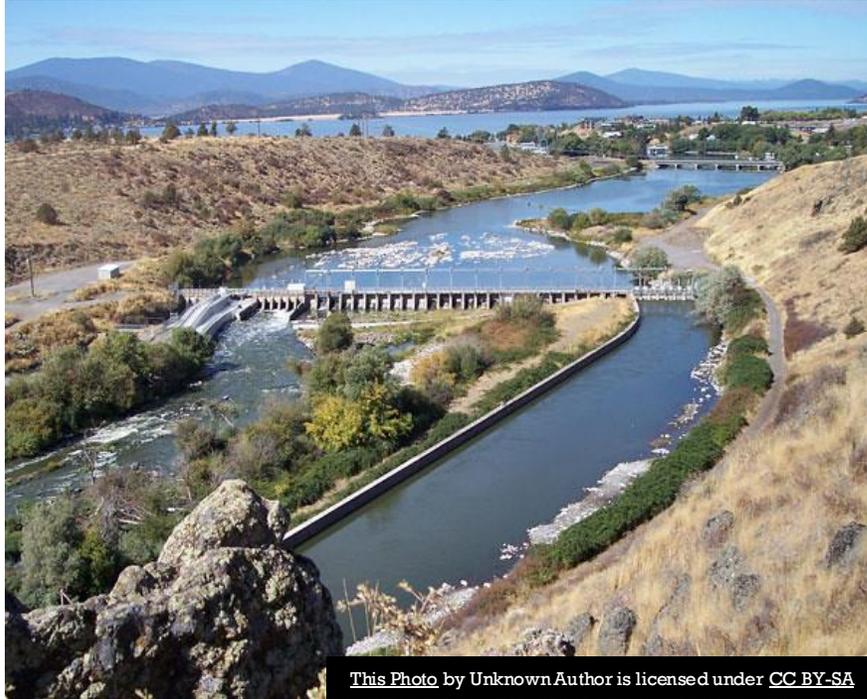


A focus on smaller individual footprints takes the focus off corporate responsibility and doesn't make enough of a difference.

To convince 100 people out of 100,000 to do the right thing (stop using pesticides for example) would be extremely difficult and wouldn't make a dent in the problem.



Examples of Eco-decency at Work



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Native tribes together with non-profits worked to destroy 4 dams on the Klamath in the Pacific Northwest

The successful KLAMATH RIVER restoration is a great example (Yurok, Karuk, Hoopa Valley, and the Klamath tribes of Klamath, Modoc, Yahooskin-Pauite) This took over 20 years



Thailand's birth control program
saved lives and improved
livelihoods



- There are a few success stories where population was focused on as a driver of poverty and this was done in a very modest Buddhist nation back in the 1970's



We Finally Asked the Right Question: What is the Role that Wolves Historically Played in Yellowstone National Park?

- The reintroduction of the wolf has greatly improved its biodiversity, once it was understood how the interactions of predator, prey and plant life relate to one another.



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Focusing on eco-history through an ethic of eco-deceny needs to be front and center

- We need a revolution of thought that cuts through the noise of corporate owned media
- We must change our story to these 2 priorities, so that we change our actions resulting in a more sustainable planet with less human and wildlife suffering.



We are
overdue for a
story change
so let's start
climbing now