



Why Bother?

by John Kastner

If you are reading this in the *Eco-Logue*, chances are you already know that the survival of our species (and a great many others) is hanging by a thread, and it's our fault. Even if we didn't have climate change to keep us awake at night, there would still be overpopulation, shrinking water resources, fracking, widespread contaminated air, overfishing, soil depletion by destructive corporate farming, micro beads, nanoparticles, species extinction, radioactive waste, the threat of nuclear holocaust and probably a dozen other things I'm forgetting that could cause the human enterprise to go belly up. It's enough to make you wonder what was Mother Nature thinking when she brought us on board. To say it's just overwhelming is a bit of an understatement, especially with the press of kids to raise, traffic to negotiate, bosses and jobs to manage, chores to be done and a spouse to keep happy. It's so tempting to put our existential predicament out of mind or to hope that someone else will take care of it. It's also just plain scary as hell.

Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of sticking our head in the sand, because the main job that Mother Nature gives all of her children is to reproduce and provide for the success of the next generation. Then there is the intense love we bear for our children and the ardent desire to secure for them a decent future. It makes no sense, though, to exert ourselves to exhaustion getting them into college if the world they graduate into is falling apart. That means we have to care, we have to act, but it doesn't mean we have to panic and be crazy.

If one were to calculate the odds of our survival, they would most likely be grimly stacked against us, but human history is the story of succeeding against incredible odds. Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglas, Helen Keller, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. - we have prevailed over extremely grim odds in the past.

About 50,000 years ago, a cataclysmic eruption of Mt. Toba in Sumatra plunged our planet into a

thousand-year freeze. Many species were wiped out. The human population at the time, perhaps 500,000, crashed precipitously to less than 10,000 individuals, a staggering impact on the gene pool. Yet we survived and prospered. Nearer our own time, the parents of the baby boomers weathered the Great Depression and World War II back to back. Then they struggled and denied themselves to send their kids to college, securing for them a better life. They were united and disciplined toward a common goal.

We can do amazing things when we make up our minds to do them. We are living in an incredible epoch in human history. We face enormous challenges, with our lives and the lives of our children in the balance. But we also have enormous resources at our disposal. We are not alone. Most of us are now linked electronically. Thousands of organizations the world over are working and fighting to create a sustainable world. We can join these efforts, if only to contribute a few dollars or resolve to live more simply, eat and buy locally and stop buying so much big box crap, the manufacture of which ravages our poor planet. We need not do it all, but we can each do something and while we are doing it, there is no reason why we can't continue to enjoy our lives. In fact, it's much better if we do. It never fails to amaze me that in the midst of dealing with my own problems as well as the planet's problems, the world persists in being impossibly beautiful. I find this to be an enormous spiritual resource. I am more inspired by the daily courage I see all around me than I am disheartened by the stupid violence that passes for contemporary news content. It is still a wonderful life, even as we step up to this urgent challenge.

Success is not guaranteed. It never is. But the outcome of inaction, hopelessness and despair is certain. There is no percentage in pessimism. So, have faith, don't lose heart. Never give up and find some small way to get involved.

2016 Sierra Club Calendars Have Arrived! Order Form on Page 5.

2016 wall & event calendars are now available! Please consider supporting the Rochester Regional Group by purchasing your calendar(s) directly from us using the order form on p. 5. Thank you for your support!



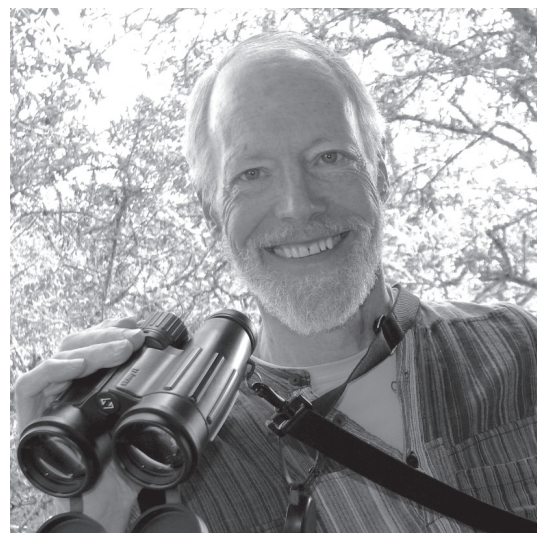
From the Chair: Take a Stand Against Racist Panel at Ontario Beach

It is important to understand the significance of the demand by members of our community to remove the panel on the carousel at Ontario Beach in Charlotte that portrays a caricature of an African American child terrorized by an a disproportionately enormous rooster. This painting, historic as it is, reflects an era where the domination of African Americans by white people was reinforced by widespread caricature in art showing them with exaggerated white eyes, red lips and in dehumanizing situations. During that era, white-controlled media commonly portrayed African American children being attacked by vicious wild animals such as tigers and alligators. This helped perpetuate the racist notion that they were savage-like. These powerful images also contributed to reinforcing implicit bias in white people. To continue to portray this image in a place of fun and recreation is a denial of the powerful messages conveyed by this art and its disrespect for African-Americans who endured

four centuries of torture and abuse in our country. Due to continuing racism, there is still a great discrepancy in their access to resources and the “American Dream.”

As an environmentalist, I believe that this carousel image not only belittles African-Americans but also their relationship to the environment and animals. We see many tragic outcomes of this today: small numbers of African Americans who feel comfortable enjoying the natural beauties preserved in our state and national parks, and the lack of good representation in our organizations by people of color.

The Sierra Club is working to rectify this situation and encourages all its members to educate themselves to become sensitive to the realities for all people of color and work to change how we live our personal lives and conduct our nation to achieve a more equitable society.



I deeply believe that how we humans treat our environment is a reflection of how we treat each other. In our community today, we have the opportunity to make a step in this direction. I encourage you to get behind our sisters and brothers from the African American community and call for the removal of this racist panel.

Peter Debes,
Chair

Clean Power Takes the Stage

by Jack Bradigan Spula

It's a new kind of “carbon sink”: The role of carbon dioxide in anthropogenic climate change is finally sinking into the American consciousness. “Climate deniers” now are a small minority. Around half of Americans now attribute climate change to human activity. The polling numbers show a healthy trend.

There's also evidence that people are getting serious about doing something. A recent Yale poll found that 75 percent of Americans now accept that carbon dioxide should be regulated as a pollutant. Even more striking: “Seven in ten Americans,” the poll found, “support setting strict carbon dioxide emis-

sion limits on existing coal-fired plants... even though the cost of electricity would likely increase.”

The shift in attitudes may presage real shifts in policy.

Enter President Obama's “Clean Power Plan,” released in early August by the White House and EPA. A beefed-up version of an earlier draft, the final plan promises to cut pollution from US power plants 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

By imposing reduction targets on individual states (targets vary according to each state's mix of fuels, etc.), the new plan would cut CO2 emissions from power plants with a menu of options: adopting more renewables (wind,

solar, etc.), converting coal-fired plants (e.g., opting for natural gas), and improving the efficiency of some power plants (thus lowering emissions).

The reduction targets are more ambitious than anticipated, so we're seeing a wide range of reactions. The national Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign said in a news release: “We applaud the EPA and the Obama administration for taking this strong step for people and the planet,” and said further that the plan bodes well for a heightened US role at the international climate meetings this fall in Paris.

(continued on p. 3)

All of the Above

by Robert Withers

You know climate change is here. Only those blinded by their own greed or willful ignorance remain in doubt. Dr. James Hansen has spoken about the “flywheel effect” adding momentum to the rate of change the longer we wait to seriously address the causes of change. The carbon industry was recently outed by emails from 30 years ago admitting they knew the inevitable effects on climate of their products and their coordinated campaign of deception to enrich themselves while sacrificing the future of mankind. Actions as morally bankrupt as any ever committed.

They and their purchased representatives have a policy of “all of the above” where drilling in the arctic, fracking, even tar sands and coal are all to be exploited for the “benefit of the country”. Belatedly and begrudgingly, renewable energy has made it onto the menu as well.

I have called climate change the greatest crime against humanity ever. Many religious leaders are calling for the fight to be built on the foundation of morality. Building on that foundation is the most effective way to win against the enormous wealth and power of those that would sacrifice everyone and everything to their own greed. There is another word for that and it is “evil”.

It was bad enough when it was the people of the “Niger Delta” (insert the name of any number of peoples and places - i.e. Amazon jungle, Middle East, Gulf coast, the sick, poor, aged, etc.) who suffered the effects of our carbon addiction. Our willingness to sacrifice them rather than fight for what was right was not a bright spot in human history. Our lack of will to fight for the powerless in many places has led us to fighting for the unborn powerless of future generations everywhere. The sacrifice now on the altar of greed is the future of humanity.

It is time for an “all of the above” movement against the immorality that is climate change. While we must act as individuals to change our personal lives, it is what we do together that tips the scale. It is when our actions bring about laws compelling responsible behavior that future generations can enjoy the nearly endless bounty that was our gift when we were born.

Lobbying is a given. Working for candidates who will make climate change their priority also a given. Working against those opposed, given. Vote with your dollars - where they go and where they don't go. Boycotting the guilty, especially those that have already said they will oppose the modest and inadequate regulations the EPA recently announced, given. Divest from their companies (already financially as well as morally the right thing to do), given. Fill the streets with demonstrations (peaceful ones so we can bring our children and grandchildren; mine are playing as I write), probably the best and most effective way to send the message. Giving time and/or money to the many groups like the Sierra Club that have a history of standing up for what is right, given. And the hundreds of other things we can do to bring the moral decision to the forefront are a given. Part of an “all of the above” strategy. Put them on trial for crimes against humanity, let them defend themselves, let's see the evidence, worth thinking about.

If we condone or merely tolerate the evil that is climate change, the future is certain. Evil is sure to prevail. If you think we should commit to making the moral decision to stop this crime against humanity, the time has come. The more we learn, the faster and more dire the consequences appear to be coming. We can use the gift of knowledge to pass on a beautiful and bountiful future for our children or we can go down in history as the most morally corrupt society ever.

Clean Power Takes the Stage (continued from p. 2)

The Union of Concerned Scientists also hailed the plan as “A Climate Game Changer.” Noting that power plants account for 40 percent of our CO2 emissions, the group said the US is now “taking the lead on climate action.” But the group does have misgivings about the role of natural gas. While the latter does “offer clear advantages over coal,” says the group, “over-relying on it for electricity creates serious economic and public health risks [and] fails to provide a long-term solution to climate change.”

UCS also notes that the plan keeps nuclear power in the mix. Many environmentalists will not be happy with that - nor with the implied role of hydrofracking in coal-to-gas conversions. But, as UCS says, the new plan can actually limit gas conversions via new emphasis on renewables.

Be prepared for a fightback, particularly in states where fossil fuels are king. Already the Governor of Montana, Democrat Steve Bullock, is charging that the White House has “moved the goal post.” An earlier version of the plan had Montana cutting CO2 emissions by 21 percent; now, says Bullock, the target could be “as high as 47.” The subtext? Parochial concerns could hinder national progress.

Many analysts believe a unified national strategy - as opposed to state-by-state targets - would be preferable. But politics may have doomed this option. For now, the celebrations of the Clean Power Plan are appropriate. And so, Forward Toward Paris!

Becoming a Climate Ambassador

by Margie Campaigne

It's never safe to assume anything, yet for the purposes of this article, I will. I'll assume you have seen and heeded many a listing of the top things you can do to fight climate change, and done as many as you could. Maybe it helps you sleep at night, knowing you've done something. There may be some you are still working on, like replacing inefficient appliances, or getting recalcitrant youngsters to turn off the lights. Even if you have done all you can, I know you aren't sitting on your thumbs and saying "Well that's all taken care of."

OK, so what's next? Do you visit family and friends and cringe when you see their wasteful habits? Do you watch the news on climate and the environment and shake your head? Do you run across petitions to sign and send to decision makers, and take a second to do so, or not? Toss this idea around in your head – become your own version of a Climate Ambassador. What would that mean to you? Who could

you influence? How would it feel to know you are setting a positive example in your corner of the world?

Unless you have forsaken a personal vehicle and bicycle or take public transit everywhere, you can advocate for and practice carpooling. It's amazing how few people let the idea cross their minds. You can be the bug in their ear. Suggest it next time you and others are heading to the same place at the same time.

Have you read or heard enough about the environmental benefits of plant-based eating so that you have changed your diet? At the next group or family meal you attend, you can prepare a vegan dish with copies of the recipe to share. You might borrow a DVD of "Forks Over Knives" or another title, from the library and screen it for friends and family, and host a vegan potluck.

Do your representatives at the local, state and federal levels advocate and vote for sound environmental legislation? Do you take the time to voice your opinion if

they don't? Could you get your kids involved in this too?

How about supporting more organizations that work for causes near and dear to you? We in your local Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club appreciate your membership dues and other contributions. Plus there are other specialized groups that advocate and work specifically for wolves, the oceans, national parks, etc. (See the article by Robert Withers for more actions).

We have won some battles, yet must be ever vigilant to not lose ground. Whether it's Monsanto and GMOs, tar sands and fracking, water issues... the list is long. Some days it can seem overwhelming, but what choice do we have? A friend leading a workshop the other day mentioned that his motivation is his great grandchildren (who by the way are not even born yet).

I welcome your feedback and questions. Feel free to contact me at mcampaigne@hotmail.com. Ambassadors, I'd love to hear of your challenges, and successes!

Creating Effective Dialog on Population

by Peter Debes, Chair

It seems that every day, we hear yet another story of the serious consequences in our country and around the world, that are resulting from climate change. The list is frightening enough so that I try to avoid thinking about it. What does amaze me is the almost complete absence from discussion, or media attention in the United States, of the most potent factor on the list: POPULATION.

Most of the things we are doing that damage the earth and alter the atmosphere, humans have been doing for thousands of years. What is hugely different is how many of us there are and the scale on which we can

extract resources and generate waste. So where a few humans once harvested fish from the ocean in a way which could be sustained, now millions of humans harvest vast numbers of fish and in many places are stripping the ocean beyond where it can restore itself.

In developed countries, we must admit, too, that our demand and consumption of all the things we have grown accustomed to expecting to buy and have, has led to over-exploitation of the earth's resources. This leads to a concept that many people in the USA prefer not to consider. Based on the average person's consumption of resources in their lifetime in the USA, we are the

most over-populated place in the world. What we are using and discarding is not sustainable and will lead to a collapse.

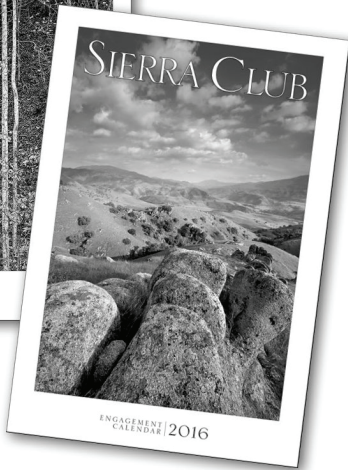
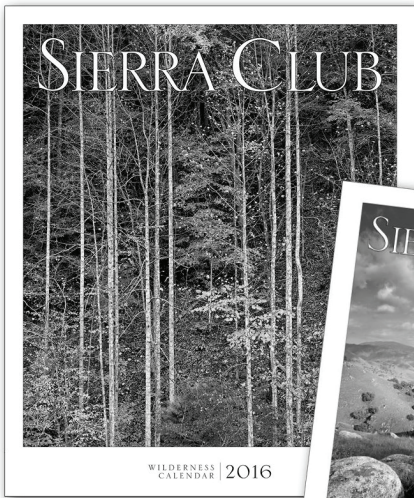
With that concept in mind, why is it, then, that we have almost no noticeable dialog or discussion going on about how to limit and even reduce our population? We used to feel good advocating for having only two children in a family. Now, it is evident that even two children in a developed country, will put an unbearable burden upon the capacity of the Earth to sustain humans at the standards we take for granted today.

(continued on p. 5)



Enjoy, explore and protect the planet

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Creating Effective Dialog on Population (continued from p. 4)

We would like to believe that countries with huge populations such as India, China or Malaysia were the overpopulated ones, yet even with their burgeoning populations, they do not account for the consumption of resources that our country does. We thus have no platform to preach to those countries about their population problem unless we acknowledge our own super-problem and actively develop strategies and programs to reduce our population and consumption. All the data show that time to address this most fundamental issue to the degradation of our planet is running out. Where a few years ago, statisticians were projecting a slowdown in population growth due to the education and advancing status of women around the globe, new figures have shown that the population is still growing faster such that the unthinkable total of nine billion people are expected to be trying to survive on the planet by as soon as 2050. This is a grim prospect, since projections point to as many as 1.2 billion undernourished humans by 2017 and even more without access to clean fresh water.

It is up to us now to take the lead in raising the discussion about population control and incentives to limit births. There are many who feel such a thing is a direct attack on their religious beliefs and this may be why this discussion rarely occurs in social gatherings or on the media. It is actually the most humane way we can avoid the ultimate consequences of overpopulation that have worked to limit our numbers in the past: war, famine, poor health, disease and pestilence. As Lester Brown stated: "Nature sets the deadlines; nature is the timekeeper. But we humans cannot see the clock."

Source: "Could food shortages bring down civilization?" by Lester Brown. *Scientific American*, May, 2009, pp. 50-57.



**Rochester Regional Group
of the Sierra Club**
P.O. Box 10518
Rochester, NY 14610-0518
 585-234-1056
<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester>
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Executive Committee Members

Dr. Cenie Cafarelli, Treasurer: mollyclelia@aol.com
 Margie Campaigne: mcampaigne@hotmail.com
 Jeff Debes, Webmaster & Conservation Chair: jeff.debes@gmail.com
 Peter Debes, Chair: phdebes@frontiernet.net
 John Kastner: jkastner@weeblox-uzzl.com
 Paul Sanders: pas271@gmail.com
 Jessica Slaybaugh, Newsletter Editor: jessica.a.slaybaugh@gmail.com
 Jack Bradigan Spula: jbspula@gmail.com
 Robert Withers, Political Action Chair: rwithers@rochester.rr.com

Committees & Projects- Leaders

Biodiversity / Vegetarian: Margie Campaigne
mcampaigne@hotmail.com
 Friends of Washington Grove: Peter Debes
phdebes@frontiernet.net
 Global Warming and Energy: Robert Withers
rwithers@rochester.rr.com
 Great Lakes: Kate Kremer
greatlakes@newyork.sierraclub.org
 Open Space: Hugh Mitchell
mitchehp@gmail.com
 Transition Effort: Dr. Cenie Cafarelli
mollyclelia@aol.com
 Transportation: Frank Regan
frankregan@rochesterenvironment.com
 Wetlands: Sara Rubin
rubin150@aol.com

Fall 2015 Calendar

All Committees are local volunteer groups of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club

Date	Day	Time	Calendar/Event	Place
Sept. 1	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600
Sept. 28	Monday	6:30-8:30pm	Global Warming & Energy Committee Meeting	Contact ClimateChange-EnergyCmte@sonic.net for location
Sept. 29	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First UMC 1010 East Ave. (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)
Oct. 6	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600
Oct. 26	Monday	6:30-8:30pm	Global Warming & Energy Committee Meeting	Contact ClimateChange-EnergyCmte@sonic.net for location
Oct. 27	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First UMC 1010 East Ave. (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)
Nov. 3	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600
Nov. 23	Monday	6:30-8:30pm	Global Warming & Energy Committee Meeting	Contact ClimateChange-EnergyCmte@sonic.net for location
Nov. 24	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First UMC 1010 East Ave. (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)

Executive Committee meetings are open to Sierra Club members. All other meetings are open to everyone.

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