

The SEPS Initiative

announcing the creation of a new environmental and educational organization

Scientists and Environmentalists for Population Stabilization (SEPS)

Mission and Activities

*Our mission is to improve understanding within the U.S. scientific, educational and environmental communities of the fact of overpopulation and its social, economic and environmental consequences at both national and global levels. We advocate for U.S. population stabilization followed by its gradual reduction to a sustainable level by humane, non-coercive means. **THINK GLOBALLY, ACT NATIONALLY!***

While some scientists are well aware of the tight connection between population density and environmental quality, it has been difficult for this understanding to be effectively communicated to the general public and the media. SEPS endeavors to educate scientists, the public, the media, and policy makers on the environmental consequences of population growth. Our short-term goal is to ensure that population and its consequences are considered at all levels of legislation within the U.S. Over the next years our goal is to stimulate development of a coherent U.S. population policy favorable to the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of the U.S. This would also benefit the rest of the world, and such a policy could serve as a model for other nations.

To these ends, SEPS supports and collaborates with other organizations in the U.S. and other countries that recognize that although overpopulation is a global problem, its resolution requires national actions. Every nation needs to recognize the problem in its own territory and take measures to deal with it that are appropriate to its own culture, history and aspirations. Where their assistance and advice are requested, wealthier nations and international bodies have moral and economic incentives to do what they can for less wealthy nations. This task is large. Many national governments and powerful political and religious factions do not even recognize overpopulation as a problem in their own countries or elsewhere.

Operationally, the core activity of SEPS is our *Population Education for Scientists and Environmentalists Project (PESE Project)*. This entails operating exhibitor booths on population issues primarily at the annual meetings of environmental scientific societies in the U.S. The booths have large displays showing the past demographic history of the U.S. and projections for the future based on a diversity of immigration scenarios. We also display and give away many dozens of articles and books on population and population-environment issues. In conjunction with other scientists, SEPS may occasionally organize symposia or special sessions as part of the regular programs of such meetings. SEPS is also dedicated to fighting the widespread suppression of discussion of national population policies by many scientific and environmental organizations, as well as by other U.S. institutions, including Congress, the mainline media, and our universities.

History and Educational Need

The idea of operating exhibitor booths on population at scientific meetings was first conceived by the board of directors of Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS) in 2011. It was prompted by the experiences of board members with censorious attitudes held by directorates of some scientific organizations toward discussion of national population issues and presentation of factual information on them.

After a few philanthropic foundations and individuals offered seed funding, CAPS and then the Population Institute Canada (PIC) submitted applications to operate a population-focused booth at the February 2012 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science that was held in Vancouver, British Columbia. But the censors raised their heads again, and both organizations were rebuffed for political reasons. This and instances of censorship by other scientific societies have been described in articles in recent issues of *The Social Contract* (Spring 2011, Fall 2011, Winter 2012).

Later in 2012 CAPS was welcomed and successfully operated such population booths at the annual meetings of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) and the Ecological Society of America (ESA). SEPS was formed after CAPS decided that it could not provide the funding or staff time for operating further exhibitor booths. Obtaining new funding, SEPS refined booth content and operations, operated a booth at the 2013 Association for the Science of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO) annual meeting and has developed plans for booths at several additional scientific meetings in 2013.

Given the multicultural, fragmented nature of U.S. society, it is not reasonable to expect that teachers in public K-12 school systems can provide strong education on population issues. In many communities teachers cannot even defend church-state separation or teach evolutionary biology without risk. In all communities, teachers would risk their jobs by discussing with their students the need for population stabilization or by discussing immigration limits, tax incentives for small families, and ethical aspects of contraception and abortion. It is a dangerous world for them, out there beyond algebra, composition and “sustainability-lite” versions of environmental science.

This situation puts an unusually large burden on teachers in colleges and universities. The 18-year-olds who come to their campuses are poorly informed about population and population-environment issues, even those issues they had been perfectly capable of understanding when they were 12 years old. So what is taught on these campuses is critical to the creation of an educated public, to fuller, more accurate coverage of these issues by the mainline media and environmental organizations, and, ultimately, to better legislation and public policy. The current professoriate, by and large, is not meeting this obligation, and SEPS hopes to help change that. ***Probably more than 99% of students graduating from our colleges and universities have no more understanding of these issues than they did when they graduated from high school. Yet little will affect them more than whether, during their lives, the U.S. population levels off below 400 million or goes shooting past 700 million. Both are real possibilities at the moment.***

Who We Are

We are primarily a U.S. organization focused on U.S. legislation, policies and actions, as indicated in our statement of principles and proposed policies below. However, during the baptism by fire provided by the AAAS directorate’s exclusion of a population booth from its Vancouver meeting, a strong alliance was formed with outstanding Canadian scientists who objected both to the censorship by AAAS and to their own government’s dysfunctional population policies. With the U.S. and Canada having similar cultures and facing similar population issues, there is opportunity for future joint projects between SEPS and Canadian organizations. We therefore have Canadian representation on our boards.

SEPS Board of Directors and Officers

Stuart H. Hurlbert (President), San Diego State University, San Diego CA

Leon Kolankiewicz (Vice President), Wildlife Biologist & Environmental Planner, Arlington VA

Joyce Tarnow (Secretary/Treasurer), Floridians for a Sustainable Population, Cross City FL

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Madeline Weld, Population Institute Canada, Ottawa ON

SEPS Principles and Policies for U.S. Population Stabilization

1. It is the responsibility of every nation to develop national population and economic policies that will promote the long-term economic prosperity of its people and the maintenance or restoration of a high level of environmental quality, including the protection of wildlife and wildlands over large areas of land and the oceans.
2. Nations should cooperate with each other in these matters, and wealthier nations should help less wealthy ones when help is requested, but no nation has the right to export its excess population and wastes to other nations.
3. Illegal immigration to the U.S. should be halted. This can be efficiently accomplished by the fair, firm and consistent enforcement of all immigration laws, with strong cooperation of local, state and federal enforcement agencies.
4. Illegal immigration has been costly to the U.S., socially, economically and environmentally. Whenever persons who have entered illegally or overstayed their visa are apprehended they should pay the penalties required by existing law and be deported. The U.S. has no moral or legal obligation to provide them any sort of legalized resident status in the U.S. on a mass basis. That only creates large additional costs to the U.S, encourages further illegal immigration, and adds to U.S. overpopulation.
5. The practice, based on misinterpretations of the 14th amendment, of granting U.S. citizenship to children born in the U.S. to illegal alien mothers should be halted. Few other western nations follow this practice. Only babies born in the U.S. to mothers who are permanent legal residents should receive 'birthright citizenship' automatically.
6. Quotas for legal immigration should be significantly reduced if the U.S. is to have any possibility of achieving population stabilization within a few decades. Ideally, the U.S. would undergo a gradual reduction in population size to a level that will be economically and environmentally sustainable over the long-term.
7. To slow population growth slightly by lengthening average generation time and to also encourage more personal development before motherhood, a cash award from the U.S. government of a few thousand dollars might be made to every woman who by a certain age, e.g. 22 years, has not yet had children. This would be available only to women who have permanent legal residency.

8. The system of tax credits for children should be revised to encourage small families. One pro-family, pro-responsibility, pro-environment policy would be to give a flat tax credit of, say, \$3,000 to any family with at least one child under 21 years old. Whether you have one child or ten, your total tax credit would be \$3,000. Currently in the U.S. there is a \$1,000 tax credit for every child, which sends the wrong signal regarding smaller families.
9. All women and men in the U.S. and elsewhere should have full access to non-coercive family planning education and services. Persons from different religious or philosophical belief systems often have very different opinions regarding the ‘beginning’ of life, development of personhood, contraception, abortion, blood transfusions, psychiatry and many other medical matters. In a nation where religious liberty and church-state separation are paramount values, great care must be taken lest the state allow particular belief systems to be imposed on the entire body politic.
10. While population stabilization is critical to the furthering of social justice, economic prosperity for individuals, environmental protection, and transition to ecological economics, these ends also require increased efficiencies of resource use and reduction in profligate levels of consumption where these occur. Such reduced consumption will become compatible with a high quality of life so long as we move steadily toward a sustainable population size. The quest for unlimited economic and population growth must be recognized as the path to ecological ruin and civilizational collapse.

Membership

Life Membership in SEPS is open to all persons and is the only class of membership offered. There is a **one-time membership fee of \$50**. In joining, you are stating: (1) that you agree with the mission, philosophy and principles of SEPS as stated above, and (2) that you give permission for yourself, to be listed on our website as a SEPS member. This latter requirement is important, as it is your good name that may give others the courage to join and take a public stand on these issues.

With your name SEPS will list only your primary institutional or organizational affiliation, or most recent one in the case of retirees, with a disclaimer noting that such a listing implies no endorsement of SEPS by your institution. Alternatively, you can request that only your city or town of residence be listed.

To join, simply send a check for \$50 made out to “**Joyce Tarnow**” to: Joyce Tarnow, 132 S.E. 276 Street, Cross City, Fl 32628 (tarnowj@bellsouth.net). Please also send her your email address and institutional or organizational affiliation. Your email address will be held in confidence by SEPS.

As a member you will receive reports on our boothing activities at scientific meetings and our other activities, and may have an opportunity to help staff, or even organize, a SEPS booth at a scientific meeting held in your city. That takes a moderate amount of time and stamina, as well as familiarity with the issues. But it is interesting and satisfying work as the scientific proletariat wandering exhibition halls is increasingly supportive of our mission. Surely the scientific establishment will follow in their footsteps!

Check the SEPS website for easier payment and donation procedures being developed.

Revised 12 July 2013