

# TheSunTimes

## Thinking about overpopulation



By Brad Pfeiffer  
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Heber Springs, Ark. — Have you ever wondered if our country might end up like China or India where reproductive controls have been implemented to limit population growth? At some point the leaders of those countries understood that large numbers of people brought large problems and that available amounts of land, food, water, raw materials, etc., could not sustain those vast numbers of people.

The world's population went from 1 billion to 2 billion between 1800 and 1930. By 1975 we were at 4 billion people. Last October the world reached 7 billion people, and in about eight more years, we should be at 8 billion. At what point do we say that there are too many people on this earth?

With every person that enters our world, demand for limited resources increases — more trees will be cut down, more minerals will be mined, more fossil fuel extracted and burned, more pollution will be produced. At some point, quality of life will diminish for various reasons such as overcrowding, pollution, and competition for limited resources. How much beauty will be lost as more natural areas are developed for housing, roads and industry?

The Center for Biological Diversity ([www.biologicaldiversity.org](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org)) reports that, because of unsustainable human population growth, other species are disappearing about 1000 times faster than is typical of our planet's history. Human population growth is wiping out rare plants and animals around the world, which in turn threatens the quality of our own existence.

Population increase also adds to our global warming problems. Bill McKibben, who wrote the first book about global warming 23 years ago, now regrets not sounding the alarm bells sooner and louder. We are rapidly losing more Arctic ice and the oceans are increasingly acidic.

In 2011 the United States set a new record for multi billion dollar weather disasters many of them right in our part of the country.

McKibben suggests that, among other things, we need to put "a stiff price on carbon to reflect the damage it does to our environment. That price signal would put markets to work in a serious way."

Not too many politicians would champion McKibben's recommendation. Consumers don't want higher fuel prices. As McKibben sees it, "the fossil fuel industry is the most profitable enterprise in history, and it has proven more than willing to use its financial clout to block political action." His conclusion is that we "need politicians more afraid of voter outrage than they are of corporate retribution." Personally, I'm not sure when widespread outrage will occur. Americans seem to be very happy when gas prices go down. They drive more and don't seem to worry about any environmental damage they are causing.

Nevertheless, if we diminish our numbers by having fewer children, demand for world resources will decrease: Fewer trees will be cut down, fewer minerals will be mined, less polluting fuel will be burned, fewer natural areas which house our plants and animals will be lost.

It seems that we need a sense of moral duty to conduct our lives in such a way that protects our planet and all the life on it. Back when I was young there was an advertisement which said "Every litter bit hurts." The wisdom was essentially the same as the phrase it played on: "Every little bit helps."

If we care about quality of life for ourselves and future generations, there are some important things we can do: 1) Work to educate our young people about birth control and the problems of overpopulation. Women in developing nations certainly need to be empowered with the knowledge and availability of birth control. 2) Work to promote marriage equality — same sex marriages harm no one and they certainly help with the population problem. Work to get your church on board with marriage equality. Let's be honest here: Some churches are still living in the dark ages on this matter. 3) Learn to conserve resources — don't drive needlessly, for example. Teach others to be conservative with our resources.