

AGO Report

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Summer 2001



Making Growth An Election Issue

Candice Guth

Today, the issues of population and consumption growth are nary a blip on the radar screen of Oregon politics. Sustainability advocates have a lot of hard work ahead of us to change that reality!

Update on AGO's Legislation

For those of us concerned about the future of Oregon's environment and quality of life, the current Oregon legislative session has been a dismal failure. As we reported earlier, Rep. Bill Witt (R-Cedar Mill) had promised us a hearing on all three of AGO's bills in his Smart Growth and Commerce Committee. What actually happened was that two of the bills (HB 3466 and HB 3713) were sent to the Water and Environment Committee by Speaker of the House Mark Simmons (R-Elgin). Rep. Betsy Close (R-Albany), the committee chair, refused to return AGO's calls or meet to discuss our bills, never mind give our bills a hearing. The Speaker's legislative director told me that all bills related to land use planning (other than systems development charges SDCs) were sent to Water and the Environment (for quick burial). So I wonder, were we promised a hearing by Rep. Witt because there was no chance that the bills would be sent to his committee? Although our HB 3179 (on SDCs) did get to Rep. Witt's committee, he reneged on giving the bill a hearing

in his committee. So much for promises.

It is interesting that Rep. Witt wrote an AGO member that he had heard from his constituents about the problems of growth more than on any other issue. But there will be no relief from bond measures to pay for new schools, police and fire stations and libraries in Rep. Witt's fast growing district, so I guess he just didn't take his constituents seriously!

Schools SDC Coalition Moving Ahead

At a recent meeting of the Fair Funding for Schools group (which is preparing an initiative that would substitute for HB 2288 that would allow SDCs for schools), Rep. Charlie Ringo (D-Beaverton) said that he thought that voters needed to make support for SDCs (growth paying its way) a litmus test for new legislators, if such bills were to make their way into law. He said that he doubted that there would be even 20 votes in support of SDCs in the current House, because the homebuilders controlled the votes of both Republicans and the Democrats on this issue.

Clearly, we have not yet made an impression on our elected officials

AGO strives to leave succeeding generations of Oregonians a more economically prosperous, environmentally healthy, and socially just State by encouraging progress toward a sustainable society, and discouraging growth focused on increased population and consumption.

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that they must take a leadership role on having growth pay its way, having the financial and quality of life costs of growth disclosed, and giving citizens the right to say no to growth. We must change that perspective. And, while we want to thank all

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Progressive leadership Forum A Success!

On April 7, 2001 AGO hosted a Progressive Leadership Forum, coordinated by Eugene Community Planning Consultant, Eben Fodor and co-sponsored by the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund and 1000 Friends of Oregon and Affiliates.

The purpose of the Forum was to bring together newly elected city council members who were elected on a no, slow or question growth platform. (Progressive Leaders for our purposes!) Attendance was excellent as was participation in the discussions. Twenty-five elected city officials from thirteen cities joined with sponsors and speakers to share experiences, information, ideas and common interests.

More than 80 potential progressive city elected officials were identified in Oregon, including those newly elected. Not only was that a significant accomplishment, but it is also a sign that concerns about growth are cropping up all over the state!

To bring together 25 unpaid or minimally paid officials on a beautiful Saturday was quite an accomplishment. The evaluations from the event were very positive and stressed the benefits of meeting like-minded people! As follow up, Eben Fodor initiated an e-mail list serve for those attending so as to continue the exchange of information.

Our thanks to Eben and to the attendees who demonstrated their dedication and interest in an Oregon that is not focused on continued growth.

Executive Director's Report

Coalition for a Livable Future (CLF) Denies AGO Membership

Candice Guth

Wakeup call! The letter from the Coalition for a Livable Future read: *"While we recognize the importance of work to address population growth and consumption, we believe the conflicts between CLF's and AGO's strategies make (AGO's) membership an unrealistic option."*

CLF is a coalition of organizations and individuals whose objectives include working toward greater social and economic justice and equity, a more sustainable relationship between humans and their environment, promoting a diverse and tolerant society, developing democratic discourse and promoting broader citizen participation in decision making about growth in the region. (see www.CLFuture.org) CLF bylaws state that membership shall occur by signing a statement agreeing with and supporting the objectives and receiving approval.

So why was AGO refused? What was the significance of CLF ignoring their own resolution when their board of directors — not the membership, decided that AGO was not a suitable member? Why was a decision made before giving AGO the opportunity to present our organization? And why was AGO excluded based on our strategies, when the qualifications only mentioned support of objectives?

The letter AGO received from CLF gave three "examples" of conflicts in strategies concerning land use planning. AGO has a record of financial support as well as policies and papers that support land use planning in Oregon. We responded to the examples and refuted their

conclusions. (See www.AGOregon.org for all related documents.)

At a meeting, we heard the real concern: immigration. When AGO does presentations around the state, not a meeting goes by when people don't ask us about U.S. immigration, so we have mentioned it on our website. They point out that the U.S. population will double within either 50 or 100 years (Census Bureau high projection for 50 years or middle projection for 100 years.) and that 66-90% of this increase in U.S. population will be as a result of U.S. immigration policy.

Americans consume at 10-50 times the rate of undeveloped nations and produce 40% of the pollutants in the world, though we are only about 5% of the world's population. So to AGO, U.S. population and consumption are the most important environmental issues the world faces today. Scientists project that continued increases threaten not just the natural world but also the biological support systems that support all life on the planet.

But, to some CLF members, population and immigration are about race. Past injustices concerning race and ethnicity have been so prevalent throughout U.S. history that discussions about population are perceived by some as just a thinly disguised way to justify more racism. Many refuse to discuss or acknowledge that there might be other compelling reasons — such as economic, social and environmental justice — to talk about immigration or population. Insensitivity to their perspective cements their position.

Some at CLF also believe that growth in is inevitable. 1000 Friends

Eben Fodor to Prepare Statewide Assessment of Growth Subsidies

AGO is excited to report that we have signed an agreement with Eben Fodor (author of *Better Not Bigger*) to prepare a groundbreaking research report that will look at the extent to which Oregon's state and local governments are subsidizing growth.

This report will provide AGO with the kind of insightful and empowering information our members need to lobby against the kinds of pro-growth subsidies and policies that bring about growth that is harming Oregon's quality of life and the health of our environment.

Growth subsidies range from those that are relatively visible (many economic development programs) to those that are buried or hidden in municipal budgets (such as infrastructure and development services). This research report is oriented towards the widely held sentiment favoring

fiscally conservative government and opposing public subsidies in general.

Subsidy categories to be examined:

- Infrastructure subsidies;
- Economic development subsidies;
- Land use windfalls such as UGB expansions, zoning changes; and
- Other subsidies such as OR Dept. of Transportation subsidies to business, and application and permit fees.

Eben Fodor is a community planning consultant in Eugene. His work is nationally recognized and is professional, thorough and supportable. Like other reports prepared by Eben, this one will be written to stand up to the careful scrutiny it is likely to receive from the development industry. The report should be available in mid-January 2002 and will be available on our website. We are planning media coverage in January to publicize the results of the report.

of Oregon said that they could not support allowing communities to say no to growth, regardless of the costs to its taxpayers or the loss in livability to its citizens. (AGO introduced HB 3713 in the Oregon Legislature, which would do just that.) The general sentiment of CLF members present was that there will be growth, Oregonians must accommodate it, and taxpayers must pay for it.

To AGO, if CLF is right about growth, then CLF's ability to ever achieve any of its objectives is highly unlikely. It is dangerous to ignore citizen discontent about growth. Oregonians see their quality of life and the health of their environment declining at the same time that government services are going down and taxes are going up. The promises of land use planning have not materialized in keeping the Oregon they love. Voters are lashing out — often worsening the problems they see.

AGO believes that growth is like any other problem societies face. It can be solved if enough people acknowledge it, are willing to talk about it, as well as work for fair and equitable changes in policy at all levels of government.

AGO shares CLF's objectives. But we think that it will take a variety of creative strategies to achieve them, plenty of room for innovation as well as lots of sensitivity if we are to succeed in leaving future generations not only a livable, but a sustainable, healthy Oregon and nation. AGO hopes to work with CLF members wherever we can to support each other's efforts.

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AGO Out and About

April 8: Appeared on Fox 49 News Extra regarding system development charges

April 19: Spoke to the Central Beaverton Community Group

April 19-May 2: Met with all seven Metro Councilors and Metro Executive Mike Burton

April 11: Met with Greg Wolfe, Community Development Director, Governor Kitzhaber's Sustainability Initiative

May 11: Spoke to junior class at Lakeridge High School in Lake Oswego on population issues

May 11: Presented at monthly meeting of the Audubon Society of Portland

May 23: Met with Board of Coalition for a Livable Future (see page 2)

May 30: Interview for Nina Paley for a documentary about the politics of population.

We also continue to meet with foundations and other organizations as well as attending workshops and meetings discussing sustainability, population, and consumption.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements

June 5: Hillsboro Kiwanis.

June 14: Bridlemile Neighborhood Association

Sept. 19: Columbia Forum, Astoria

THINK ABOUT IT! As Population Rises, Civility Declines

Andy Kerr

Some Oregonians worry that today's Oregon is not as civil as it once was. They fear that if Portland continues on its present course of population increase, it will eventually and inevitably become as uncivil as New York City.

Rudeness can be a rational adaptation to overcrowding. In New York, the very functioning of the metropolis requires its citizens to be aggressive, short, and seemingly uncaring (at least to this native Oregonian). To be otherwise, means being crushed or ignored.

A few years ago a colleague from the city of New York (pronounced "Manhattan") and I were going from Lloyd Center to downtown. We were going to be late if we didn't make the next MAX train, just coming into view. I broke into a jog and yelled "come on, we can make it." Though he was incredulous and doubting, his pace increased. As we sprinted into the open train doors I gave a wave and a smile to the operator.

Between gasps, my colleague shook his head and exclaimed, "this would never happen in New York." If a New York bus or subway driver saw someone running, he said, they would close the doors and speed off all the earlier.

During my latest visit to Washington, DC — where, as John F. Kennedy once observed, northern hospitality meets southern efficiency — I learned that Metro — that glorious, clean, friendly and efficient train system, was straining at the increased ridership due to increased

population. The plan for making it more efficient was to have the train operators close the doors after 30 seconds, even if people were still waiting to get on. Efficiency experts think that this will save 8 seconds per stop. The effect will be that entering passengers will no longer wait for exiting passengers to leave the train first. More people will be carried, but at a cost of civility.

So what does this have to do with civility in Oregon? I come from a small Willamette Valley town where if two cars were stopped in the road chatting and another approached, it was likely that the third driver would get out to visit with the others or wave and go around. Such is no longer the case in my hometown.

In Washington, DC, I used to wait for the Metro train to fully stop before I left my wide and padded seat. In New York, I've been so crowded on a subway that personal space is reduced to a few layers of clothing as one is sardined groin-to-buttock and with one's face in another's armpit (all the while not looking anyone in the eye). Given enough time and growth, this is the future of MAX.

In Los Angeles, where citizens are as effectively crowded as New Yorkers because each one has a car wrapped around them, the decline of civility is manifest by road rage.

In the skies, air rage is attributable to overcrowded airplanes guided between overcrowded airports by an overtaxed air traffic control system — all because of continued population increase.

A Bright New Day is Possible!

The following excerpt from Kelpie Wilson's article, *The Lysistrata Strategy in the Postmodern Age (Wild Earth, Winter 1997/1998)*, proves that a bright new day is possible!

"We could humanely reach an optimum global population in two generations, because exponential growth works both ways. If every woman on Earth had not more than one child, the number of people of reproductive age would halve in one generation. By the second generation, we could achieve what Ann and Paul Ehrlich (1990) estimate is the optimum population for the planet: two billion. Think of what a bright new day it would be for those two billion people and the other species they share the planet with."

Yes, there are many factors affecting civility, but as Oregon grows in population, it's likely to become less civil. Technology and planning can mitigate for the many downsides of growth, but it cannot mitigate for the loss of elbowroom. (On second thought, actually we do have ways to mitigate for elbowroom loss—Prozac and valium.)

As elbowroom diminishes, so does civility. Our conversations will turn from the weather and the Trailblazers to the best way to get across the West Hills in rush hour. Portlanders will hotly debate the

Sunset versus 217 just as New Yorkers argue the Queensboro Bridge versus the Midtown Tunnel. As we stand in line for our morning caffeine, pleasant conversations among the regulars will fade over time as someone—maybe even you—shouts their order over the shoulder of the customer who took a millisecond to pocket their change.

The only civil thing to do is to stop growing.

Andy Kerr is founder and president of Alternatives to Growth Oregon

Willamette Valley Livability Forum: Making Choices for the Future

Sarah Bidwell

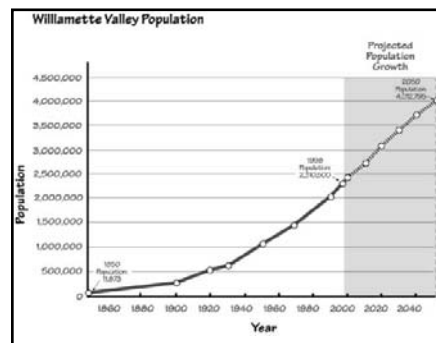
"The future is in our hands: population explosion endangers quality of life across Willamette Valley."

Title of newspaper supplement mailed to 500,000 residents in Willamette Valley, promoting the Willamette Valley Livability Forum Conference

You would think that with a title like this, the Willamette Valley Livability Forum Conference would be about population growth—surprisingly it was not! Luckily, several AGO members and staff were there to bring it up and discuss an alternative future, one with a stable population.

Several organizations presented the results of their respective alternative futures studies: Willamette Valley Alternative Futures Research

Project, Willamette Basin Alternative Futures Analysis, and the Alternative Transportation Futures. The results were very interesting and I'd recommend that you see the Forum's website to learn more about them, www.wvlf.org. Unfortunately, in assuming an increase in 1.7 million new residents by 2050, each of the



Exponential population growth in the Willamette Valley doesn't have to just happen! Future studies, like the ones presented at the Conference, should consider a future in which population is stabilized.

studies failed to explore a future scenario with a stable population. So even in their best-case scenarios, farmland and forestland are lost, urban growth boundaries are expanded, and traffic is worse. I don't know about you, but a future in which traffic is only 40% worse than today's, versus 80% worse if we do nothing, is not something to get excited about. What about a future in which traffic is 40% better than today's? Now that's the kind of future I'd like our children to have!

One final noteworthy tidbit: the Forum polled Valley residents and Forum members on growth and livability issues. Interestingly, forum members identified overpopulation as a top concern. Now they just need to identify it as part of the solution!

Chinook Book: Good Ideas, Great Savings (Portland-Vancouver Edition). The Celilo Group, Portland.

Rather than the normal coupon book collection of product and service discounts to encourage unrestrained consumption, the first 42 pages of this book gives well-presented practical suggestions for living more sustainably around the house. It's specific to the Portland region, so it gives names and addresses of useful resources. It's followed by 180 coupons that supposedly meet criteria of greenness by "significantly reduced environmental impacts than either their competitors or alternatives." Many coupons can meet the test; some add a suggestion that one ride the bus on the way to redeeming the coupon and some others offer no assertion of "greenness." For the \$15, one can get coupons worth \$5,000 of free or reduced price goods and services. No calculation is made of what one would have to spend to fully "save" the \$5,000.

As long as we need food, water and shelter to survive we will consume. The balance is one of efficient consumption in ways and levels that are sustainable. The Chinook Book is a good start for the average consumer.

For more information: www.chinook-book.net or www.northwestwatch.org.

Look for the updated and expanded version of the Chinook Book in Sept.!

BOOK REVIEW

This Place on Earth 2001: Guide to a Sustainable Northwest

Alan Thein Durning, Northwest Environment Watch, Seattle, 107 page, paperback

Reviewed by Andy Kerr

While everyone (at least that I regularly hang out with) is in favor of sustainability, few have a comprehensive plan toward achieving it.

Setting aside the rather interminable discussion of just what sustainability is and how we will know when we reach it (to me, sustainability means: [1] ending human-caused extinction of other species; [2] the human species living off solar income; and [3] eliminating garbage), Northwest Environment Watch founder Alan Thein Durning and his crew have 24 rational and doable suggestions to reconfigure cities, taxes, subsidies, and breeding habits which will make our lives on this Earth not only more sustainable, but also better.

This Place on Earth: Guide to a Sustainable Northwest proposes some interesting "green" taxes, rebuilding our cities for people, rather than the automobile, eliminating some envi-

ronmentally harmful government subsidies, and establishing markets that make the consumer pay the full costs of consumption.

I have one major complaint. Durning titles a section of reforms that would "Slow Population Growth." Does he not want to end it; or is he just politically afraid to say it? One does not have a strategy of slowing cancer or child abuse. Actions to solve the problem are what's needed — simply slowing in these cases is not adequate. Such apparent timidity is odd. Durning doesn't flinch in his advocacy for emergency (post-sex) contraception.

Though the NEW guide is small in both pages and page size, the ideas are big. The suggestions in this book are changes in governmental, social and fiscal policies. (For personal behavior changes that both lighten your load on the Earth and improve your quality of life, see the Chinook Book, a green "coupon book" — reviewed in the sidebar.

Sustainability Initiative

Con't from back page

In April, 2001, AGO's Candice Guth met with Greg Wolf, the Sustainability Initiative's Director of Community Development. We discussed AGO's belief that we need to offer citizens a clear view of how their personal and business choices on consumption, as well as their very personal choices about family size, should be included in discussions on sustainability. AGO attended a brown bag update on the Initiative on May 24, 2001, and will be looking for opportunities to participate in additional meetings. The work that is being done is exciting. To learn more about sustainability efforts around the state visit the website of Oregon Solutions, www.oregonsolutions.net.

In a speech on August 28, 2000, Governor Kitzhaber made suggestions about subsidies to growth and tax policies that encourage large families that closely parallel views of AGO. However, the suggestions need to be formalized in the programs for achieving sustainability.

Member Update

Sarah Bidwell

Update on Model Ordinances

Several members have been working to introduce AGO's model ordinances to their city councils. In Happy Valley, the city council has expressed support for charging full SDC's (development impact fees) and will be holding public hearings in June. In Tigard, the City Council voted to charge the maximum for parks SDCs.

Member Meetings

Meetings will now be held at AGO's office, 205 SE Grand, #203 in Portland. Please join us in June for a

presentation and discussion on Voluntary Simplicity. Brian Beinlich, AGO Board Member, will share his philosophy and actions he has taken to simplify his life and limit his consumption.

Due to many people going on vacation in the summer months, AGO will not have member meetings in July and August. Join us on Tuesday, September 18th to kick off an action-filled fall!

Beginning in September, member meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of the month.

Growth an Election Issue (con't from page 1)

of AGO's members and activists who called, wrote, and emailed their Legislator in support of AGO's three bills, we now need you to again contact your legislators to complain that your concerns were ignored in Salem! Next session, AGO will be there early (hopefully with sympathetic elected officials!) and have an extended slate of bills that address growth issues in the state.

Now is a good time to review our webpage article called "Ten Questions on Population, Consumption and Growth to Ask Candidates for Office." If you are not on the internet, contact us and we'll mail it to you!

Get Involved

Speaker's Bureau

AGO is working to develop a speaker's bureau of staff, board, and members who can speak on growth issues to a variety of civic, environmental, and hopefully school groups. An AGO member has agreed to spearhead this effort and we are looking for members willing to participate in trainings, seek out speaking opportunities, and make the presentations. Call (503) 222-0282 and speak with Candice if you are interested.

Model Ordinances

Give your community the ability to get a grip on growth! Take one or both of AGO's model ordinances to your city council and encourage them to adopt it. Call (503) 222-0282 or email action@AGOregon.org to get copies.

MEMBERSHIP / CONTRIBUTION FORM

Yes, I want to Keep Oregon Oregon and

N1A601CM

Become a member of AGO

Make an additional contribution

___ \$35 Regular

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___ \$250 Sustainer

___ \$1000 President's Circle

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Evening Phone _____

Day Phone _____

My check enclosed

Bill my VISA or MasterCard (card#) _____

Print name as it appears on card _____

Expiration Date _____ / _____

Signature (if using credit card) _____

Sustainability Meetings

As part of Governor Kitzhaber's Sustainability Initiative, meetings will be held around the state to highlight state governments' efforts to make their operations more sustainable.

On June 28th, Stephanie Hallock, Director of Oregon DEQ will speak on DEQ's activities and projects related to sustainability. See www.oregonsolutions.net for details, and info on other meetings.



Alternatives to Growth
Oregon

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*We are all called to be architects of the
future, not its victims.*

BUCKMINSTER FULLER

ACTION ALERT!

Candice Guth

Petition to Governor Kitzhaber - Include Population in Sustainability Initiative!

AGO is working to include population in Governor Kitzhaber's Sustainability Initiative. We are continuing to collect, and have already collected hundreds of initiative petitions, which say,

"We the undersigned, believe that state government cannot effectively address sustainability in Oregon by focusing exclusively on consumption, and ignoring the need for a stable and sustainable level of population. We urge you to give equal weight to consumption, appropriate technology and population in your otherwise commendable Sustainability Initiative."

You can help us by printing out a petition from our website, www.AGOregon.org, gathering signatures, and mailing them to AGO at 205 SE Grand Ave., Suite 203, Portland, OR 97214. We need to let the Governor and his staff know that population must be factored into a discussion of sustainability!

After we have gathered a significant number of petitions, AGO hopes to meet with and present the petitions to Langdon Marsh, the new director of the Initiative. We'll keep you posted on our progress.

Con't on the bottom of page 6

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