Thank you for your interest in becoming more involved with the Sierra Club’s Global Population and Environment Program! We have compiled the following toolkit to assist you in planning future activities related to population, reproductive health, climate, and the environment.

**THIS TOOLKIT HAS:**
- More information on the program
- Example activities from Global Population and Environment Program volunteers
- A list of films from partner organizations that may be of interest or use for film screenings
- Contact information

**GLOBAL POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM**

The Global Population and Environment Program is based in Washington, D.C. at the Sierra Club’s legislative office. The program is over 40 years old and continues to grow in size and in scope — but we remain one of the only environmental organizations in the U.S. with a population program.

We recognize that protecting the world’s environmental resources requires addressing human needs. The combination of rapid population growth in the developing world with unsustainable consumption in developed countries is threatening the health and well-being of families, communities, and our planet. Therefore, we advocate for access to voluntary family planning services in order to improve community health while lowering carbon pollution and increasing resilience to the effects of climate disruption.

**Mission:** The Global Population and Environment Program believes that healthy people and a healthy environment go hand-in-hand. We focus our efforts on educating Sierra Club members and the general public about the links between population, reproductive health, and the environment. We advocate for global reproductive health, rights, and sustainable development initiatives. We work with like-minded partners to achieve the following goals:

1. Increasing universal access to voluntary family planning and reproductive health services.
2. Advancing women’s and girls’ basic rights, including access to health care, education and economic opportunity.
3. Promoting youth leadership through trainings and workshops.
4. Raising public awareness of wasteful resource consumption in the context of social and economic equity.

The Global Population and Environment Program policy was adopted by the Sierra Club board of directors on November 17, 2007. Facts and figures from the policy are currently being updated. The existing policy is [here](#).
Example Activities

Below is a list of activities conducted by Global Population and Environment Program volunteers that can be replicated on an individual, chapter/group, community or campus level.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A Letter to the Editor (LTE) can be written for any occasion and any time of year, but are great to tie into days of special recognition. Check out Sierra Club’s tips for writing a great letter [here](#). A few dates to consider:

- March 8 - International Women’s Day
- March 22 - World Water Day
- May (varies) - Mother’s Day
- June (varies) - Father’s Day
- July 11 - World Population Day
- September 26 - World Contraception Day
- December 7 - International Human Rights Day

Population volunteer Bonnie Tillery wrote the following LTE to commemorate World Population Day, published in the Times of Trenton 2/9/2013:

**Mother Earth needs humans to support family planning**

*Here are some facts to consider and some solutions to support as we recognize World Population Day, July 11:*

*The world now hosts 7.2 billion people. The U.S. has 316 million. Only China and India have more people, and India is about one-third the size of the U.S.*

*For the first time in history, more than one billion people go to bed hungry every day. Another 768 million people do not have access to safe drinking water.*

*Almost half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended, and 80 percent of teen pregnancies are unplanned — the highest rates in the industrialized world. Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education has been proven to delay teenagers’ first sexual encounters and give them the tools they need to become pregnant only when they are ready to support a child. We need to speak up for these programs, as well as Planned Parenthood, Medicaid and Title X, which make affordable health care and family planning services available to millions of women otherwise unable to obtain them.*

*Worldwide, 222 million women want to plan their families and space their children, but they do not have access to contraception. Recently, first ladies Laura Bush and Michelle Obama were interviewed at a summit of African first ladies in Tanzania. Both stressed the importance of investing in the education and health care of girls and women. We can do this by supporting the U.S. Agency for International Development, International Planned Parenthood, the United Nations Population Fund, and other nongovernmental organizations that provide education and health care.*

*To have a world in balance with nature, we need to stabilize our planet’s population. Education and health care for girls and women are a good start.*

COMMUNITY RESOURCE

“Touch the Earth” interactive exhibit at Seattle Woodland Park Zoo, contributed by Population volunteer Chris Kennedy.

One of my most successful volunteer experiences involved working on a joint effort with nonprofit and private organizations and volunteers to get an exhibit in the Seattle Woodland Park Zoo called “Touch the Earth”. This interactive exhibit, just inside the main gates at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, flashes numbers that represent population and resource overconsumption. By touching various screens, a user can learn about the interaction between population growth and increased resource consumption. A top number labeled “people on the rise” represents the world’s human population, while a second number labeled “habitat on the decline”, is an estimate of how many acres of the planet’s wild habitat remains; the numbers flash responsively. Users can go through different scenarios to learn about solutions to wasteful resource consumption, including women’s empowerment through education and access to family planning, as well as how each of us can decrease our own carbon footprints and live more sustainably, such as riding bikes and eating lower on the food chain.

This project was completed in 1997 after about a year of work, reaching roughly 1 million people every year.
At the beginning of the project, zoo visitors were asked to complete questions to determine their level of understanding of population issues. The survey was redone after the touchscreen installation, demonstrating increased awareness of population and resource consumption issues.

**CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

*Presenting Population, Health and Environment to Young People*, Contributed by Population volunteer Adjoa Sankofia Tetteh

Wanting to inspire conversations about the implications and hopes for the future in a world of 7 billion people, in 2011, I collaborated with the NYC Population Committee to organize two events: one at a synagogue in Brooklyn and the second at my former graduate school, Teachers College at Columbia University. Speakers included climate scientist William Schlesinger, international sexual/reproductive health and rights activist from Nepal and UN Fellow Babu Ram Pant, Bill Ryerson, the Founder & President of Population Media Center, and a member of the NYC Population Committee. The events were attended by a diverse group of people: graduate students, environmental activists, people involved in international development, community members, and more, and the speeches opened the door for further conversations on the importance of discussing and inspiring action with regard to the intersections of justice, population, health & the environment.

*Campus and Sierra Club Presentations*, Contributed by Population volunteer Gayle Loeffler

As a volunteer activist for the Sierra Club Global Population & Environment Committee, my favored tool for our messaging has been the varied power point presentations provided by staff. They can easily be tweaked by volunteers depending on the venue given. They provide an informative, pictorial, connection between environmental degradation, rapid population growth, and discuss the solutions: women’s health, education, and access to family planning services. I’ve personally used them at various functions/organizations, including university classes, student forums, churches, a 5-state conference of the Feminist Majority Council, and less formal gatherings. My most memorable was given to a large student body in an ethics class at Texas Woman’s University, where I was being interrupted and challenged by a young woman in the class. However, at the conclusion of the presentation, surprisingly the student raised her hand, stood up and announced that she had been in school most of her life, would soon be graduating university, and asked “Why didn’t I know this? This is the most important information I’ve ever learned!” The entire class of over 75 gave a standing ovation.

**Films and Resources**

Listed below are a number of films from our partners exploring themes related to population, reproductive health and the environment. The films are informative in their own right, but can also be used at screenings and discussions. Please give appropriate credit when shared.

**Films**

From *Population Action International*: 3

- **Weathering Change** (13:57) – A brief documentary about four women in Ethiopia, Nepal and Peru who struggle to care for their families, while also facing the challenges of crop failures and water scarcity. The film demonstrates how family planning, girls’ education, sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation are part of the solution.

- **Dollars and Sense: The Case for Contraception** (2:08) – Over 222 million women want access to modern contraception, but can’t get it. With a commitment of $1 billion dollars towards comprehensive reproductive health services, more than 1 million lives could be saved. Lives and money could be saved by investing in family planning, this short film shows how.

From the *Wilson Center*: 4

- **Healthy People, Healthy Environment** (9:35) – “Along the northern coast of Tanzania, an innovative approach to development combines efforts to conserve natural resources with reproductive health services and sustainable economic opportunities. In Healthy People, Healthy Environment, three women from the Pangani and Bagamoyo districts – Rukia, Mahija, and Fidea – show how these integrated population, health, and environment (PHE) projects empower them to help their families, their communities, and their environment.”

From *The Girl Effect*: 5

- **The Girl Effect: Why Girls?** (2:23) – The Girl Effect is a movement that believes in the power and benefit of investing in girls. Investing in girls has a profound ripple effect on her community and subsequently the world.
From **National Geographic Magazine**:⁶

- **7 Billion (3:00)** - While this 2011 film, part of a year-long series from National Geographic about the world reaching 7 billion, is no longer up-to-date, its message remains pertinent and current. Over the course of the 3-minute film, facts and figures flash across the screen which compare current population numbers with past statistics and future projections.

From **Aspen Global Health and Development**:⁷

- **Family Planning in Malawi (3:56)** – This film takes place in Malawi, a country struggling with the burdens of extreme poverty, resource scarcity, and a rapidly growing population that could triple in size in the next 35 years. We are introduced to Marda and Alfred, a young couple who have had the ability to use family planning to decide how many children to have, and when to have them.

From **Population Connection**:⁸

- **World “dot” video (7:18)**: - This brief video shows how over time and historic events, populations have grown and shifted around the world.

From **Resource Media**:⁹


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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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**ENDNOTES**

   Healthy People, Healthy Environment: [http://www.newsecuritybeat.org/healthypeople/#.UcDTt_kbAwo](http://www.newsecuritybeat.org/healthypeople/#.UcDTt_kbAwo)
5. The Girl Effect: [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org)
8. Population Connection: [www.populationconnection.org](http://www.populationconnection.org)