

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

World Population Day

Did you miss it?

Last Wednesday, July 11, was World Population Day, which was first established by the United Nations in 1989 to highlight the world's exploding population.

My columns focus almost exclusively on Pottstown, but we live in such an interconnected world that demographic and scientific trends affect us all.

It took 200,000 years for the world's human population to reach 1 billion people, in about 1800. It took a little more than a hundred years for the population to double, to 2 billion. Now, in just ninety years more, it has nearly quadrupled, to 7.6 billion.

The United Nations projects the world population will reach 10 billion by the middle of this century.

All these people are consuming more resources and burning more fossil fuels than ever before, which is warming the earth and bringing about a change in our climate that endangers life as we know it for future generations.

Coastal cities from New York to Tokyo underwater. Violent storms. Droughts. Species extinction.

Fossil fuels made the Industrial Revolution possible, which in turn created the modern western world of

abundant food, clean water, sanitation, heated and air conditioned buildings, cars, and a cornucopia of appliances.

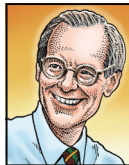
But now we must wean ourselves off fossil fuels and develop new forms of energy. We've made astonishing progress in recent years in creating usable energy from the sun and the wind, and developing battery technology that allows us to store that energy to use as needed. Technological advances also make it possible to build a new generation of nuclear power plants that are much safer than the boiling water reactors of the 1970s vintage such as Limerick.

The question is whether we can develop and deploy new forms of energy worldwide before the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere causes irreversible changes to our climate.

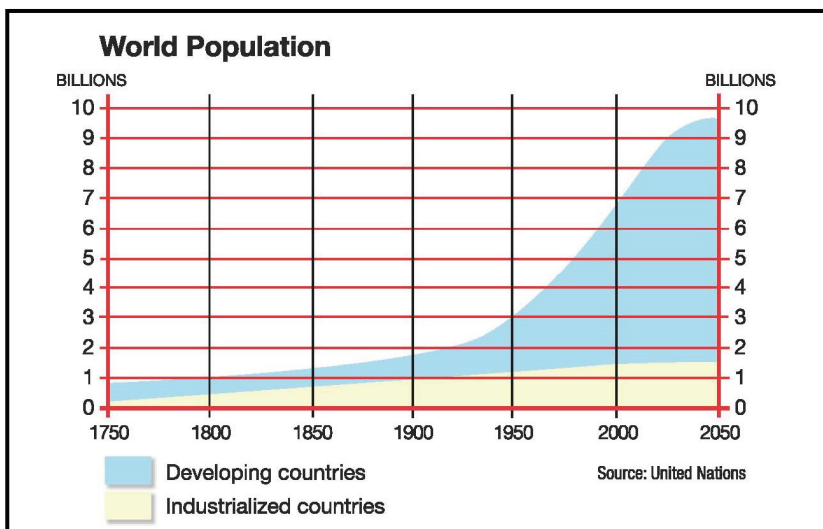
It doesn't help that the president of the United States, the most powerful person on earth, repudiates basic science and has successfully encouraged his followers to do the same.

The president can make policies and Congress can make laws. But no one can change the laws of physics.

Of all the issues clamoring for our attention, none is more important than this one.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



Skyrocketing world population and the rise of resource consumption in developing countries are putting a tremendous strain on the carrying capacity of the earth. Climate change is the most dangerous result.