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New epoch in world history

We are five days into the new year, but 70 years into a proposed new epoch, according to a group of geologists.

Scientists have divided our planet's 4.6 billion-year history into various time frames, which are determined by studying fossils and rock formations.

Most of these time frames cover millions of years.

We are currently in the Holocene, which goes back just 11,700 years, the end of the last ice age. At that time, 4 million humans inhabited the entire planet.

The proposed new epoch starts about 1950, when the human population reached 2.5 billion.

Prior to that, "your attitude would have been, 'Nature's too big for humans to influence,'" the head of the geologists' group, Colin Waters, told the *New York Times*.

But by the 1950s, the world's humans grew so numerous, and started making so much impact on

the planet, that the geologists believe a new epoch is warranted: the Anthropocene.

The new epoch would officially recognize that the human race is changing all life on Earth. "It's been a shock event, a bit like an asteroid hitting the planet," Waters said.

National polls and the news media tell us the current big story is inflation, or immigration, or the war in Ukraine.

It's not. The big story is the snowballing human population that is destroying our natural resources and snuffing out biological diversity.

It will take an unprecedented worldwide effort to change human behavior and employ new technologies to preserve the planet as we've known it for centuries.

But so far, we continue to take nature for granted. And the Anthropocene will be followed by another epoch in which human civilization no longer exists.



Commentary by
 Tom Hylton

CHANGE IN HUMAN POPULATION OVER 12,000 YEARS

7.7 billion people in 2020

HOW HUMANS TOOK OVER THE PLANET

The exponential rise of the human population has transformed Earth. Dense forests have become farmland. Cities have risen and sprawled, and fossil fuels that formed over millions of years have been burned in a few decades rapidly heating the planet

