



# Rating Environmental Groups on Immigration

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FAIR is calling on environmental groups to join us in open, honest public discussion about the impact of immigration on U.S. population growth and the environment. Community planning is crucial to protecting and managing the diverse and delicate ecosystems throughout the United States, and un-checked immigration policies make it nearly impossible.

From 1965 to 2015, the United States population grew by 67 percent, according to Pew Research.<sup>1</sup> More than half of this growth – 47 percent – was fueled by immigration. The same study estimates that 88 percent of the population growth in the United States by 2065 will stem from immigrants and their decedents.

Population growth has put an enormous strain on already overburdened U.S. water and energy supplies, as well as other natural resources. Additional uncontrolled immigration will put pressure on communities to expand at unanticipated rates, which means they have less time to adequately examine how such growth might impact the environment and local ecology.

New housing developments, roads, strip malls, etc, are encroaching on wildlife habitat. Additionally, our sprawling urban areas are crowding fragile coastal wetlands and paving over farmland at alarming rates in order to meet the needs of an increasing population.

Many environmentalists agree that population growth is a serious issue. However, most don't speak out publicly for fear of alienating the social, economic and religious constituencies who support policies that fuel population growth. This is particularly true when immigration reform enters the discussion.

Even as immigration-driven population growth is swallowing up open space, taxing the environment, and causing increased pollution, waste, habitat destruction, and deforestation across the country, America's leading environmental groups remain silent.

In some cases this silence can be attributed directly to pressure from elite donors, such as David Gelbaum, who has given hundreds of millions of dollars to environmental groups.

Gelbaum's philanthropy includes approximately \$200 million in donations to the Sierra Club.<sup>2</sup> In an interview with the New York Times in 2004, he revealed that "in 1994 or 1995" he told the Sierra Club's Executive Director "if they ever came out anti-immigration, they would never get a dollar from me."<sup>3</sup> In February of 1996, the organization decided to no longer take a stance on immigration despite strong resistance from its members.<sup>4</sup>

*"If [the Sierra Club] ever came out [as] anti-immigration, they would never get a dollar from me."*

—David Gelbaum, open-borders advocate and Sierra Club donor

FAIR examined the stances of 20 environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, on immigration and population growth. We scrutinized official publications, board resolutions, web sites, position papers and, in some cases, spoke directly with staff.

Of the 20 organizations examined, 12 talked about overpopulation, and 7 addressed it as a problem in the United States.

However, while some groups did acknowledge immigration as a major source of U.S. population growth, most shied away from advocating immigration reduction as a solution, with only three organizations acknowledging the role that immigration has in population growth.

The factors that deter open discussion of immigration are varied. Many groups want to avoid the controversy that comes from discussing immigration reform. Others fear offending major donors that are sympathetic to, or profit from, immigration. Furthermore, organizations face the risk of being labeled racist by open-border's groups for their opposition to unsustainable immigration levels.

Environmental groups must not ignore the "elephant in the room." Immigration policy is, in effect, population policy. Without slowing immigration - which fuels most population growth - every environmental cause is ultimately a lost cause.

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We owe it to our children and grandchildren to take an honest, responsible look at American immigration policy. That doesn't mean abandoning our humanitarian obligations to those in other countries seeking a better life. Rather, it means responsibly designing immigration policies that ensure a healthy and sustainable future for our country.

*FAIR examined the stances of various environmental groups on overpopulation and immigration. Here's what we found:*

Does the group...	Acknowledge population growth as a problem?	Address U.S. population growth?	Acknowledge immigration's role in U.S. population growth?	Take a stance on immigration reduction?	Explicitly oppose the Border Wall?
American Forests	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
American Rivers	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Audubon Society	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Climate Institute	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Conservation Foundation	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Defenders of Wildlife	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Environmental Defense Fund	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Friends of Earth USA	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Greenpeace	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Land Trust Alliance	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

National Wildlife Federation	×	×	×	×	✓
Nature Conservancy	✓	×	×	×	✓
Population Connection	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Population Institute	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sierra Club	✓	✓	×	×	✓
Sightline	✓	✓	×	×	✓
Union of Concerned Scientists	✓	×	×	×	✓
Wilderness Society	✓	×	×	×	✓
National Resource Defense Council	×	×	×	×	✓
Wildlands Conservancy	×	×	×	×	×
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, “Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065,” September, 2015, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/chapter-2-immigrations-impact-on-past-and-future-u-s-population-change/>

<sup>2</sup> Todd Woody, “You’d Never Know He’s a Sun King,” *The New York Times*, May, 2010, Accessed March, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/business/09green.html>

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Weiss, The Man Behind the Land, *The Los Angeles Times*, October, 2004, Accessed March, 2018, <http://articles.latimes.com/2004/oct/27/local/me-donor27/2>

<sup>4</sup> Sierra Club, “Immigration,” Accessed March, 2018, <https://www.sierraclub.org/policy/immigration>