

# Understanding Our Environment

## Saving The Planet—A Program At A Time

(NAPSA)—It took all of history, until about 1800, for the human population to reach its first billion—now the world census adds a new billion every dozen years.

The world is just past the middle of the fastest population explosion in history. Developing nations are currently experiencing a population “youthquake.” But the birthrates in the industrialized world—Japan, Europe and the U.S.—are declining, while the number of seniors is skyrocketing. These trends will dramatically shape the world’s future.

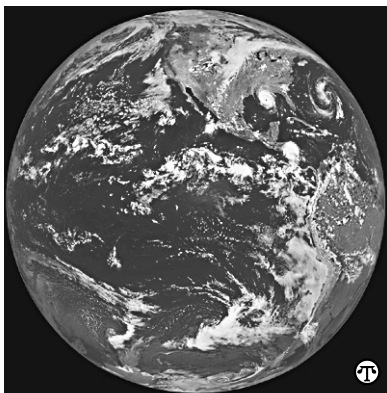
These and other curious relationships between people and the planet will be revealed in NOVA’s two-hour Earth Day special, “World in the Balance,” airing from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20 on PBS (check local listings).

“World in the Balance” explores a massive baby boom in the developing world, and the precipitous plunge of birthrates in the West. NOVA goes on to cover China’s hyperactive economy—the fastest growing economy in the history of the world. As China aspires to a more American middle-class lifestyle, it will affect China’s air, land, and water—and the global climate as well.

If China’s billion-plus population were to live like Americans, who use 25 percent of the planet’s resources, another planet the size of earth would be required to meet everyone’s needs—hopefully China can learn and improve on past American development paths.

Fortunately, trends are not destiny: social policies such as family planning services, education (particularly of women and girls), and reproductive health care can affect the lives and prospects of families in developing nations.

Saving the planet’s resources will require cooperation from both



nations and individuals. Here are a few steps that you can take to help salvage the planet.

1. Stretch your legs. Instead of relying on your car, walk or ride a bike. Cars account for 21 percent of the world’s greenhouse emissions.

2. Eat less meat. By eating just one pound of beef each week, you’ll save 364 pounds of grain and 130,000 gallons of water.

3. Reduce junk mail at the Direct Marketing Association’s Web site, [www.thedma.org](http://www.thedma.org). If a thousand people cut junk mailings in half, it would save 170 trees each year.

4. Brighten your home with compact fluorescent bulbs. Using four of these bulbs can save you \$205 on your electric bill.

5. If every American household bumped up the temperature on their fridge by one degree, it could save three million tons of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

6. Leave grass clippings on the lawn and use native plants that don’t need irrigation.

Resources for educators can also be downloaded to help high school students explore the complex interplay between population and the environment by visiting [pbs.org/nova/worldbalance](http://pbs.org/nova/worldbalance). To order this program, call 800-949-8670.