

# AGO Report

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Spring 2002



## Growth at AGO

While it may sound ironic that AGO is embracing growth, the organization celebrates the addition of two of its newest staff members, Sarah Sameh and Chuck Adams. Sameh began as Executive Director in mid-January. After seven years with the Environmental Federation of Oregon (now Earth Share of Oregon), she brings a strong background in fundraising, contract negotiations, fiscal management, program development, marketing, personnel management, and administration.



*Sarah Sameh, AGO's new executive director, looks forward to building alliances with other groups.*

During Sameh's tenure at the Environmental Federation of Oregon the organization grew significantly and became better known in the Portland business community. She participated on the lead negotiating team during contract negotiations with Earth Share which eventually led to an affiliation agreement between Earth Share and sixteen states. Earth Share of Oregon is one of the most successful environmental federations in the country. Sameh continues to serve as vice chair of the national board of directors for Earth Share.

Sameh came to EFO from Starbucks, where she directed train-

ing programs, coordinated community events, and assisted with day-to-day operations of Oregon stores.

After growing up near the Blue Mountains of Eastern Oregon, Sameh moved to Portland in 1988. She enjoyed Portland for thirteen years and decided to move south to Ashland in the summer 2001. She is still in the process of making Ashland home and takes great pleasure in the myriad outdoor recreational opportunities in the area, not to mention the various plays and performances that are a constant in Ashland.

When asked about the grandeur of the job Sameh admits, "The issues of population and consumption growth are very complex. I am eager to learn as much as possible and build strategic alliances with other groups that are focused on these issues. In my experience it is only through collaboration that any of us makes any progress." Chuckling, she adds, "That and a lot of patience."

One of Sameh's first orders of business is to lead the board through strategic planning and help the organization define its direction. One objective that has already received extensive support from the board: building chapters around the state. To help jump-start the program, Sameh

## Alternatives to Growth Oregon

*AGO strives to leave succeeding generations of Oregonians a more economically prosperous, environmentally healthy, and socially just State by encouraging progress toward a sustainable society, and discouraging growth focused on increased population and consumption.*

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hired Chuck Adams as AGO's outreach director. Adams adds a wealth of talent in management, strategic analysis, communications, marketing, and public relations. He brings with him extensive involvement in environmental

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## Use Water Wisely

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As last summer showed us, water is a limited resource, even in the wet Willamette Valley. Considering that water use can double in the summer mostly due to outdoor watering, here are a few tips for conserving water indoors and out:

### Indoors

- Repair leaks
- Install water-saving devices (faucet aerators, low-flow showerheads, toilet dams)
- Run dishwashers and clothes washers only when you have a full load

### Outdoors

- Water in the morning or evening
  - Landscape with native plants
  - Reduce evaporation by setting mower blades one notch higher, and mulching around trees and plants
  - Consider installing a rain catchment system
- 

## Where's Candice?

Several AGO members have contacted us to see what former executive director Candice Guth is doing now. After a bit of a break, she is now the financial manager for the Oregon Lions for Sight and Hearing Foundation.

Though she has left AGO, she hasn't ended her commitment to the stabilization of population and consumption. She serves as treasurer for Keep Oregon Oregon, a state political committee that raises and expends funds to influence the political debate about the end of growth.

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# Executive Director's Report

Sarah Sameh

I came on board in mid-January as the new executive director of AGO. I have spent the last two months absorbing as much information as possible and meeting with various friends and supporters of the organization. As is often the case with a learning process, the most valuable thing I've learned is that I have much to learn! I believe one of the most useful tools to me and the organization will be to prioritize our projects and focus our efforts. With this in mind, the board and staff of AGO will undergo a strategic planning process over the next few months. Outlining our goals and priorities will enable us to become a stronger and more effective organization.

To help us chart our course, we are finding out what other Oregonians think and feel about population and consumption growth. We are conducting focus groups this month, and the information we gather will allow us to craft a strategic message that will hopefully result in more support for changes to current pro-growth policies.

We also continue to focus on our high school education programs and will soon devote more time and energy toward building chapters around

the state. But perhaps our most notable recent achievement is the release of Eben Fodor's long-awaited report, *Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon*. A first-of-its-kind study anywhere in the country, the economic report shows that state and local governments in Oregon spend over one billion dollars per year on growth subsidies. Given that 95% of Oregonians think Oregon is big enough or too big already, this amount of spending is unacceptable! The executive summary and full report are posted on our web site at [www.AGOregon.org](http://www.AGOregon.org). I encourage you to check out the report and share its findings with others. Oregon governments must stop spending taxpayers' money for growth Oregonians say they don't even want.

Your continued support assists us with this kind of valuable research and allows us to publicize the study's important findings. Until we influence policy-makers to make decisions that support Oregonians' wishes, your tax dollars will continue to pay for growth.

I deeply appreciate your support and look forward to meeting you.



Chuck Adams, AGO's new outreach director

## Growth at AGO

*Continued from page 1*

organizations and a deep dedication to finding and creating tangible solutions to preserving the planet.

Says Sameh, "I can't think of a better person than Chuck to reach out to Oregonians and share AGO's message. His unbridled enthusiasm is contagious and is just what the organization needs at this time. I'm thrilled about our whole team."

The AGO team now includes Sameh, Adams, and long-time administrative director Sarah Bidwell.

# ~~Where~~ Do We Grow From Here?

On March 15, 2002 the Metro Council convened a conference on growth strategies at the Oregon Convention Center.

Approximately 500 attendees represented local and state government agencies, non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, local businesses and the general public.

The conference focus was implied by its title, "Where do we grow from here?" This acceptance of continual growth was underscored by Metro's statement that the tri-county area should plan for a population increase of 700,000 in the next twenty-five years.

While the opening debate between Metro executive officer Mike Burton and Larry George, executive director of Oregonians in Action (OIA), was spirited, it emphasized private property rights and implications of a current OIA initiative which would limit the authority of Metro to set density standards.

Following the debate, three morning workshops focused on transportation, green spaces, and general growth topics. Each was hosted by panelists from academia, the private sector, government agencies and non-profit organizations. Andy Kerr was a panelist for the workshop covering general growth topics. The session was well attended, and the majority of the questions from the audience were directed to Kerr, demonstrating a growing curiosity about the end of growth. The afternoon was spent in small group discussions regarding specific questions on growth. Many AGO

members were present and stressed the need to include discussions about not growing.

Though the panelist workshops and the table sessions were particularly helpful, the entire conference was structured around the flawed assumption that growth is a given. All of the conference literature assumed indefinite continued growth, and each workshop focused mainly on growth management. None of the questions presented during the afternoon session left room for questioning the wisdom of continued growth. Discussions of growth and growth management are certainly an important aspect of any community planning debate, but no such debate is complete unless the idea of an end to growth is included.

Although the conference ignored the option of halting growth, Metro councilor Bill Atherton has authored a model ordinance designed to allow citizens to control growth by voting on whether to continue the current substantial taxpayer subsidies to new development. Several AGO members testified at a recent hearing where Atherton presented this ordinance. A second Atherton ordinance provides for implementation of the Metro charter requirement that regional carrying capacity be addressed by the council. This ordinance will be heard by the Atherton-chaired natural resources committee. It is anticipated that the committee will appoint a task force to recommend specific implementation steps.

## Alternatives to Growth Oregon

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## Media Response to Growth Subsidies Report

Since the release of the report, *Assessment of Statewide Growth Subsidies in Oregon* on March 2, 2002, AGO has received media coverage across the state:

March 5, 2002

Radio piece: KOPB Portland.

Radio piece: KEX Portland.

March 12, 2002

Radio piece: KBOO Portland.

March 26, 2002

Newspaper: *The Oregonian*, front page of Metro section.

Radio piece: KLCC Eugene.

Radio piece: JPR Ashland.

March 27, 2002

Newspaper: *Medford Mail Tribune*.

Newspaper: *Klamath Falls Herald & News*.

Newspaper: *Pendleton East Oregonian*.

March 28, 2002

Newspaper: *Eugene Register Guard*.

Newspaper: *Daily Journal of Commerce*.

In addition, an article from the *Herald Tribune* in Sarasota, FL should be appearing soon.

# Growth Subsidies Top \$1 Billion Per Year

Eben Fodor's recently released study documents over \$1 billion in subsidies to growth

The goal of this trail-breaking research effort was to develop a reasonable estimate of the extent to which growth is being subsidized in Oregon. This study is the first effort to quantify all the growth-inducing public policies in any state of the

US. While it was an ambitious project, it was approached from a realistic perspective. This project was not intended to produce the definitive report on growth subsidies, but rather to conduct an initial inquiry into the general nature and extent of these subsidies.

The report looked at state and local government spending on infrastructure subsidies for new growth, tax incentive subsidies for business development and housing construction, subsidized planning and development services, and the costs of increased traffic congestion.

### Subsidies Come at Expense of Education, Health Care

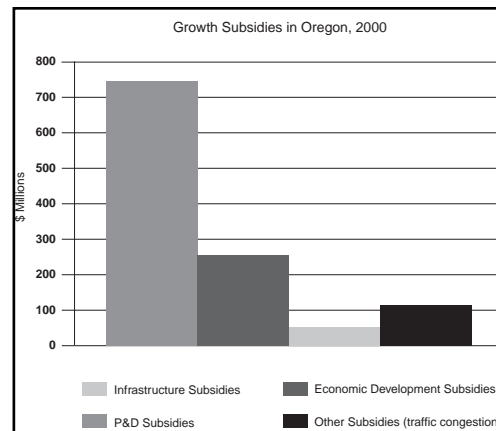
It is apparent that growth is being heavily subsidized in communities throughout the state. The total amount of this subsidy is substantial and comes at the expense of taxpayers and other public programs and services provided by state and local governments. This is especially sig-

nificant when considering the severe budget shortfalls the state is experiencing and the unmet needs of public schools, health care, social services, road maintenance and other basic services. The cost of these subsidies is paid primarily by Oregon's taxpayers.

As noted in the report, growth is subsidized in many other ways that are not among the local government expenditures reported. These subsidies include environmental and social impacts that affect local quality of life and

increase the cost of living. Such costs are borne by all residents and businesses of the state. The extent to which the public costs are offset by benefits from growth is the topic of a great deal of speculation and represents an opportunity for further research.

All growth subsidies examined in this report were evaluated for the year 2000 (the most recent period for which data was available). Most visible among these subsidies are economic development programs that offer incentives to lure new businesses. But there are many other hidden subsidies that also stimulate growth. The study examined the following main categories of subsidies:



**Infrastructure subsidies to serve new development cost Oregon taxpayers three quarters of a billion dollars a year.**

- Infrastructures Subsidies
- Economic Development Subsidies
- Subsidized Planning and Development Services
- Other Growth Subsidies (including traffic congestion costs and unmet infrastructure needs)

The statewide growth subsidies evaluated in this report total \$1.14 billion for the year 2000. This figure includes only state and local government spending and does not include any federal funds. It is a conservative estimate, since not all of the subsidies could be reasonably determined and since the estimates tended to err on the low side.

### Infrastructure Tops List

The largest subsidy is the provision of infrastructure to serve new development at three quarters of a billion dollars, or 65% of all subsidies. The second largest growth subsidy is economic development at \$257 million, or 22 % of all subsidies. Traffic congestion ranks third at \$115 million. Among such sizable expenses, subsidized planning and development services seems like a minor cost at \$33 million.

The subsidy estimate does not include either unmet (unfunded and yet to be built) infrastructure needs or many of the environmental and social costs of growth which impact public health and quality of life.

### Paying for Growth We Don't Want

Not only is growth subsidization a heavy burden for Oregon's taxpay-

ers, but it is stimulating urban growth that most Oregonians have indicated they don't want. Public opinion surveys clearly show that Oregonians are not enamored with growth. A 1999 statewide survey found that 95% of respondents think Oregon's population is either too big or just right. (1999 Oregon Annual Social Indicators Survey, OASIS, by the University of Oregon Survey Research Laboratory.) Surveys from two major metropolitan areas in Oregon show that most residents think their area is growing too quickly and Portland Area residents indicate they want local government to try to slow it down. (2001 Metro Public Opinion Study by Davis and Hibbitts, Inc.; and 1999 City of Eugene Community Survey by Advanced Marketing Research.)

There is little or no indication that the general public wishes to have their tax dollars spent subsidizing growth. Local governments and public officials who believe otherwise should survey their local residents on the matter. They should refer the question of growth subsidies to the voters to confirm that these growth-inducing expenditures truly enjoy the strong public support that should accompany such a considerable use of public funds.

The report and its executive summary are available online, [www.AGOregon.org](http://www.AGOregon.org). Printed copies of the full report are available. Call Sarah Bidwell at (503) 222-0282.

## Polls: Control Growth

**Polls indicate strong support among Oregonians for controlling growth.**

- **95% of Oregonians say Oregon is either too big or just right.**  
1999 Oregon Annual Social Indicators Survey, OASIS, by the University of Oregon Survey Research Laboratory. See <http://www.uoregon.edu/~osrl/oasis99/oasispress.html>
- **73% of Portland Metro area residents want new growth to pay for all or more of its own way.**  
2001 Metro Public Opinion Study by Davis and Hibbitts Inc., May 2001. See [http://topaz.metro-region.org/lets\\_talk/index.cfm?page=hibbitts](http://topaz.metro-region.org/lets_talk/index.cfm?page=hibbitts)
- **54% of Portland Metro area residents indicate they want local government to slow growth down.**  
2001 Metro Public Opinion Study by Davis and Hibbitts Inc., May 2001. See link above.
- **Eugene Poll shows residents think their area is growing too quickly.**  
City of Eugene Community Survey conducted Jan. 5-19, 1999, for the city of Eugene by Advanced Marketing Research. Call the City of Eugene, (541) 682-5010.

For a copy of any of these polling results, contact Sarah Bidwell at (503) 222-0282 or [sarahbidwell@AGOregon.org](mailto:sarahbidwell@AGOregon.org).

## Where Do You Stand?

**Activity encourages thought and discussion on controversial topics**

**AGO's high school education program, Living Within Limits, ends with the activity, "Where Do You Stand?" Presenters read a series of statements to which students take a stand - by agreeing or disagreeing with them. There are no right answers, but students are asked to explain their position. Here's a sampling of some of the statements. *Where would you stand?***

*Advances in technology will allow the Earth to support a rapidly growing human population into the future.*

*There are natural limits to the number of people that the Earth can support.*

**It's interesting how many students will agree with both of the above statements, despite the contradictions!**

*Population growth is inevitable.*

**Like the general public, many students believe that population growth is inevitable. However, some students have pointed out that many countries around the world have stabilized their population, and future growth in our communities depends upon the choices we make TODAY.**

*I believe that things will be better in fifty years than they are now.*

**Again, many students are pessimistic about their future. But as one student at Grant High School said, "It's up to us!"**

## Living Within Limits: Challenging Students to Think About Their Personal Lifestyle Choices

*Sarah Bidwell*

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is visiting local high schools and challenging students to think about their personal lifestyle choices. For many students, this is the very first time they have considered population growth as an environmental issue, or that their consumption patterns may not be sustainable.

Throughout the program we stress the importance of the choices we make TODAY for our future.

### Off to a Strong Start

Since November 2001, staff and volunteers from AGO and the Columbian Group of the Sierra Club have presented 19 programs to approximately 475 students in the Portland area. Teachers and students have been very responsive and appreciative - especially when we bring cake to share! The cake represents the world's resources and is used in an activity that explores consumption and distribution of resources around the world. Students form groups representing the major regions of the world - their size is determined by population. The cake is divided and distributed according to the percentage of resources consumed by the region. As you can imagine, the one person representing North America gets over half of the cake, while most of the class in the Asia group are left with a sliver. Students are asked, "Why does the person from

North America have so much cake? How did it feel when you saw how much other groups got? Did you do anything to get more cake, or give any away?" We follow this activity with several overheads describing



*AGO's Sarah Bidwell trains volunteers in Eugene to present the Living Within Limits education program to area high school students.*

ecological footprints and lead a discussion on actions they can take to reduce their impact on the Earth.

### Program Receives Grant

The Meyer Memorial Trust generously awarded AGO a \$9,500 grant in February to support expanding the Living

Within Limits program. Funds will be used to conduct volunteer trainings, create kits of teaching materials for each community, and develop a resource library of curricula and videos for teachers and other educators.

### Training in Eugene

In February, I traveled with Ramona Rex of the Sierra Club to Eugene to train volunteers in the program. Many thanks to AGO member Peggy Robinson for hosting the training and recruiting the volunteers! We are now following up with teachers in the area and working to schedule programs.

### Get Involved

If you are interested in presenting programs to students in your community, call Sarah Bidwell at (503) 222-0282.



# AGO CHAPTER NEWS

Establishing a stronger statewide presence and increasing the membership base have always been priorities for AGO. To augment these efforts AGO will begin to focus on building local chapters and working with local communities on relevant growth issues. AGO can play an important role in supporting no-growth policies by providing ancillary support materials, research data, model ordinances, and survey results to its local chapters and concerned citizens.

In order to better address local, regional and statewide issues AGO will continue to refine its message about planning for an end to growth. By narrowing its focus the organization will be able to deal with emerging concerns in greater detail while retaining the flexibility to swiftly adapt to evolving issues within the overall end-of-growth debate.

AGO recognizes the need to develop local chapters in as many communities as possible throughout the state, and upcoming strategic planning will focus on ways to enhance this effort. Support of local chapters and local citizens with common interests is critical to maintaining and expanding the organization's base of development.

The recent addition of outreach director Chuck Adams will allow AGO to become more active in creating chapters throughout the state and offer more extensive support to these chapters. Currently there is a chapter in Corvallis, as well as interest in initiating chapters in Bend, Eugene, and Ashland. If you would like to participate in forming a chapter in your area, contact Chuck at (503) 222-0282, or [chuckadams@AGOOregon.org](mailto:chuckadams@AGOOregon.org).

## AGO Out and About

**Feb. 22:** Co-hosted Werner Fornos, President of the Population Institute, at Portland State University.

**Feb 25:** AGO Vice-Chair John Baldwin presented "Carrying Capacity and Economic Development" at Portland State University.

**March 4:** Tabled and presented at Portland Community College, Rock Creek Campus.

**March 15:** Andy Kerr presented at Metro Growth Conference (see pg. 3).

**March 21:** Chuck Adams presented at Linnfield College in McMinnville.

## AGO Wish List

- Digital camera
- Copier
- Bookshelf
- Plants for office

## MEMBERSHIP / CONTRIBUTION FORM

**Yes, I want to make Oregon better, not bigger and**

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- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become a member of AGO | <input type="checkbox"/> Renew my membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Make an additional contribution |
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## Go.....or Stay Paperless

Our paperless newsletter program has gotten off to a great start. Already a significant number of members have opted to receive the *AGO Report* via email.

To receive a pdf of the newsletter, send Sarah Bidwell an email with your name and mailing address to: [paperless@agoregon.org](mailto:paperless@agoregon.org).

### Is It Time for You to Renew?

Check out your renewal date that is printed above your name on the mailing label. Use the form on page 7 to continue your support!



Alternatives to Growth  
Oregon

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*The Earth says: rejoice! You have been born into a world of self-maintaining abundance and incredible beauty. Feel it, taste it, be amazed by it.*

DONELLA MEADOWS

## THIS PLACE ON EARTH 2002: MEASURING WHAT MATTERS Northwest progress report gives region mixed reviews, citing boom in pavement, trucks, and prisons

One of the things our society does best is count. We count stock prices and consumer confidence, business starts and baseball scores. But, as *This Place on Earth 2002* argues, despite our obsession with measurement, we fail to count what counts most: human welfare, the strength of our communities, and the health of our natural systems. The book assesses the Northwest's progress in ten key areas of environmental and social well-being, giving the region a mixed review overall.



"The first step is to develop indicators that spring from the region's values, not just from the marketplace," says Alan Durning, executive director of Northwest Environment Watch. "And the next is to pay attention to them - as closely as we follow the vacillations in GDP."

To order a copy, call NEW at (206) 447-1880 or go to [www.northwestwatch.org](http://www.northwestwatch.org).

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