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MEET THE BOARD

Joel E. Cohen



YEARS OF SERVICE: Eight
BACKGROUND: Bachelor's and two doctorate degrees (applied mathematics and population sciences/tropical public health) from Harvard University. As a mathematical biologist, has studied the behavior and demographics of populations ranging from flour beetles to humans. Author or co-author of eight books, including *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* Professor at Rockefeller University and the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Member of the National Academy of Sciences and Council on Foreign Relations.

Family: Two children.

Grew up in: Washington, D.C., and Michigan.

Lives in: New York City.

Being captivated by science as a teenager: I remember reading in

some journal I picked up randomly at the library about a worm that responds in a predictable pattern to different intensities of light. Basically, the worm turns its head. So the idea came to me early that there's probably order in life. Mathematics is a good tool for finding it.

The difficulty of population predic-

tions: I don't know how many people the Earth can support. Estimates range from less than 1 billion to more than a trillion. There are so many assumptions that underlie anybody's estimates.

What do we want? Parking lots or parks? Jaguars with four wheels or jaguars with four legs?

Quantifying environmental progress:

We as a conservation community need

to do ecological monitoring. Are we really protecting the biodiversity we want to protect? Are we delivering the goods? That has not been the practice on the ground universally. The science is there or can be developed.

The joy of hiking: I've done weeks of backpacking in New York, Alaska and Hawaii. For me, it's a great thrill to see how the Earth is made. It's sensual, exploring a landscape on foot.

Visiting the Galapagos Islands with the

Conservancy: It was kind of a peaceable kingdom. Roger Milliken, a board member, was snorkeling and started dancing with one of the sea lions; they were spiraling around each other like a double helix. I was transfixed. It was just gorgeous. They were obviously playing.