



“There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew.”

Marshall McLuhan

February 2016

The ‘Landfill Five’ Dump Curbside Recycling

SAGE Meeting every third Wednesday - February 24, 2016 at the Lethbridge Public Library downtown, 7 to 9 p.m.

Lethbridge Sustainable Living Association presenting “Now we’re cooking with solar!” February 15th. See webpage at www.lethbridgesustainableliving.org/

Footprints on the Landscape Speaker Series. **“Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks”** Tuesday, Feb 9, 2016, 7-9 p.m. Lethbridge Public Library, Main Branch.

Wilderness, Wildlife and Human Interaction. Cochrane Ranchhouse, March 6th, 403-932-5632

Councillors Jeff Coffman, Rob Miyashiro, Blaine Hyggen, Liz Iwaskiw, and Joe Mauro voted on January 25th against the proposed strategy to initiate curbside recycling in Lethbridge in a 5-4 decision.

Reasons included a concern over the costs to operate a Materials Recycling Facility, competition with businesses, and the ability for citizens to ‘opt out’ of the service.

The narrow focus on potential costs precluded a discussion of the wider benefits of responsible diversion of resources from the landfill.

Benefits that might have been considered include: creating a culture of conservation and environmental stewardship; a reduced demand for raw resources and the environmental damage related to extraction; and less energy to convert recyclables back into useful products with less undesirable emissions related to energy consumption. In other words, service fees were of concern, however the costs of the status quo were not seriously considered.

Effective waste diversion would not only divert resources from the landfill as

saleable commodities, but would also provide an energy source (from bio-digestion) and a rich compost, returning important minerals and fertilizers into the soil to grow our food.

Despite the paucity of vision of the five members of City Council who denied the motion, and ignoring the lack of commitment to adhere to the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (that Lethbridge spent a half a million dollars developing), and despite promises made in an Accountability Lethbridge survey before last election, and regardless of the costly efforts of City Waste & Recycling to provide the information requested at the whimsy of Council, what is completely incomprehensible is this:

Why would the City of Lethbridge approve a waste diversion policy that sets targets for residential waste reduction from 330 kg per capita to 180 kg per capita by 2021 and 140 kg per capita by 2030, *and then scuttle the mechanism that is most likely able to achieve these targets?*

Lethbridge will probably have to wait two years before this decision can be corrected.

(From SkyFire Energy Inc.)

Alberta Solar Co-op is currently creating the working model for future community owned solar farms in our province and they plan to launch their first project this year.

Alberta residents will have the opportunity to become a member of the co-operative and directly invest in a profitable renewable energy project - a chance to support, invest and own a part of Alberta's renewable energy future.

In the process of launching their first community owned solar farm, the Alberta Solar Co-op have created a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo to raise initial funding for the solar cooperative. As this

initiative is the first solar co-op in Alberta, they will face the highest start-up costs in the country. Once they have created the model for this first project, however, they plan to replicate it and build more community owned solar farms in the province.

In the design and implementation process, Alberta Solar Co-op will:

- Develop the legal framework and model for the community owned solar farm
- Start the distributed generator application process
- Complete Offering Memorandum (A legal document stating the objectives, risks and terms of the investment).

This will establish a framework for streamlining future projects.

Grassy Mountain Coal Project

Benga Mining Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Riversdale Resources Ltd, is proposing to develop the Grassy Mountain Coal Project. The Project is located in south-west Alberta near the Crowsnest Pass, approximately 7 km north of the community of Blairmore. The Project involves a surface coal mine, a coal preparation plant, and associated infrastructure including a coal conveyor system, a rail load-out facility, an access corridor, maintenance shops, and other pertinent facilities.

Based on the *Oldman Watershed Headwaters Indicator Project*, The proposed Grassy Mountain Coal Project would be located in the headwaters of the Oldman watershed that provides approximately 90% of the water in the Oldman River and supports about 225,000 people downstream. Residents are highly dependent on the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains for annual snowmelt to our rivers and creeks. The Oldman headwaters are currently facing pressure from the cumulative effects of multiple use and watershed integrity has declined across approximately 95% of the headwaters landscape. The Grassy Mountain Coal Project would add another type of use to an already crowded landscape that is a critical source water area for our semi-arid region.

Environmental impacts will include fugitive dust emissions

Interesting Links:

University of Alberta, Climate Website

albertaclimaterecords.com

Government of Canada, Climate Website

ec.gc.ca/sc-cs/Default.asp?lang=En&n=A5F83C26-1

Bloomberg Interactive Graph, Climate Forcings

www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-whats-warming-the-world

Calving Glaciers

www.upworthy.com

Fracking Explained (youtube video)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uti2niW2BRA

Renewable Energy from Plastic Grass

www.sciencealert.com/rooftops-covered-with-plastic-grass-could-be-a-valuable-new-source-of-wind-energy



Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

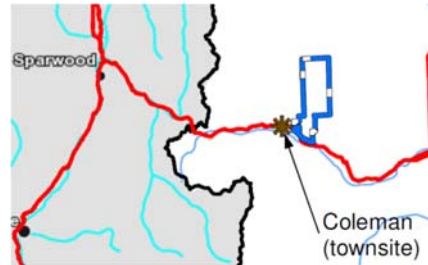
A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.

Visit us at: <http://sage-environment.org/>

If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

sage-communications@sage-environment.org

from blast and excavation activities, and coal transfer to rail cars. There will be a physical loss of fish habitat as a result of earth moving operations, and potential contamination of downstream habitat due to heavy metal depositions from fugitive dust emissions.



Gold and Blairmore Creeks, their tributaries and the Crowsnest River are critical habitat for the westslope cutthroat trout, a federally threatened species and subject to a critical habitat order recently issued by the [Federal Government](#). Furthermore, mine operations will likely impact tourism in the area, as these rivers are a popular fly-fishing destination in the province.

Greenhouse gas emissions from operations are expected, as well as the potential for methane released from the coal during blasting. Acid and nitrogen deposition from atmospheric emissions is expected downwind. Mine waste, runoff water, and hazardous wastes from the process may also have potentially deleterious impacts on the environment, including surface-to-groundwater contamination through unlined water ponds. Noise impacts on wildlife are anticipated, disturbing ecosystem health.

The mountaintop coal mine and facility is currently seeking regulatory approval.

The Ecological Thought



I suppose, after reviewing a couple of very good books for the last newsletter, I was fated to pull this one out of the pile. *The Ecological Thought*, penned (under the influence) by Timothy Morton, emphasizes 'The' in the title. It's not Ecological Thought, or An Ecological Thought, but **The** Ecological Thought. This would be a bold position if it had been followed by, well, a position ... *any* position.

The book reads like a series of koans - of the 'sound of one hand clapping' variety. It is quite possible that this book was an extended Buddhist meditation, as he seems quite enamored by Tibet because the Tibetan plateau is so much closer to the stars (... I'm serious).

There are so many things wrong with this book. One, is that he does not define any terms - particularly Nature, environment and ecology which, ostensibly, is what the book was to elucidate. Another, is that he makes straw-man arguments, creating caricatures and then arguing how silly they are. And yet another, he seems to contradict himself at every opportunity. The combined affect is for a reader to find their atman astro-projecting over a mind-numbed body as Maya dissolves.

"Ecology equals living minus Nature, plus consciousness" (p.19).

"We discovered the strange stranger, the unexpected arrival, the being about who we know less than we presume" (p.60).

"The ecological thought eats through the life-nonlife distinction. ... Material organization turns out to be sets of formal relationships, not squishy stuff" (p.68).

"If there is no true self, then perhaps *there is a nonself*. ... Likewise, if there is no Nature, perhaps *there is a non-Nature*" (p.76).

"Fractal geometry denatures Nature" (p.106).

"Humanism has to be denounced only because it is not sufficiently human" (p.113).

"The injunction to act now is ultimately based on preserving a Nature that we are finding out never existed" (p.118).

Now do you believe me? Oh, you might think that I am taking these quotes out of context - well, that's just the point: *there is no context!*

Morton relates the story depicted in the movie *Grizzly Man* in which a man lives with a group of 'cute' bears until he is tragically killed and eaten by them. I thought it was an apt metaphor for this book: Morton himself tries to live among his cute koans only to be devoured by them in the end.

Another strange aspect of the book is his gallant knight-errant-routine, tilting at 'environmentalists'. Of course, this term is never defined.

"We find ourselves pinned to the void. Schizophrenia is a defence, a desperate attempt to restore a sense of solidity and consistency. It's highly likely that some environmental rhetoric is delusive in this way" (p.31).

"This creates problems for environmental ethics, which risks oversimplifying things to coerce people to act" (p.38).

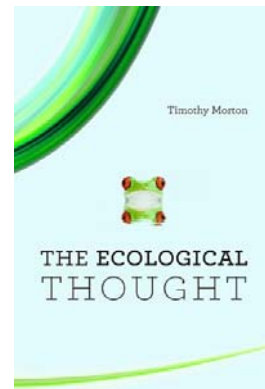
"Environmentalism has been trapped in the ideologies of masculinity, the ultimate performance of nonperformance, the ultimate imitation of Nature" (p.81).

"Environmentalism is a work of mourning for a mother we never had. To have ecology we must give up Nature" (p.95).

"In a perverse way, environmentalist arguments based on consequentialism (e.g., it makes you feel better to care for Earth) actually impede action" (p.100).

Now, I think self-reflection is as important as accepting criticism and perhaps 'environmentalism' needs some more discussion in our complex world, but Morton's position is incomprehensible. Never do we learn why 'ecological thought' is superior to 'environmental thought'; nor, do we learn why Nature and the environment must disappear (as a concept) before we would be able to address environmental challenges.

The only redeeming aspect of *The Ecological Thought* is the froggy photo on the cover. The book will not help you understand humans, Nature, or humans-in-Nature. The book would not even be interesting to people who do not believe they live in an environment. I don't even think this would be of interest to a drug-addled freshman class at the University of California (where Morton teaches). Argghh!





A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

January 21, 2016

To: Mayor Spearman, City of Lethbridge
City Council

From: Braum Barber, Chair
Southern Alberta Group for the Environment

Re: Residential Waste Diversion Strategy

The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) is a non-profit, volunteer organization that advocates and advances environmental issues on behalf of our region. SAGE **supports** the efforts of the City of Lethbridge to advance waste diversion in the Construction & Demolition (C&D), Industrial, Commercial & Institutional (ICI), and Residential sectors.

We support the three sector strategies on the basis of better managing our natural resources, and reducing landfill emissions to the natural environment. According to the Conference Board of Canada, we produce more waste per capita than any other OECD nation, Alberta produces more waste per capita than any other province, and Lethbridge produces more waste per capita than the other cities in the province. This makes us one of the most wasteful groups of people on the planet.

Relying on voluntary recycling, only about 15% of the residential waste is diverted from the landfill, and the other sectors are even less effective. Research suggests that these rates of voluntary recycling will not substantially improve without implementing curbside recycling of materials and compostable waste. Clearly, with greater amounts of waste being diverted, Lethbridge will have to increase its capacity to sort, store and sell recycled commodities: SAGE supports the establishment of a city-owned, privately operated Materials Recycling Facility.

SAGE believes that City Council has the support of a majority of citizens in Lethbridge as evidenced by the Ipsos Reid poll conducted in 2013, and on the basis that most of the members of City Council were elected on platforms that included support for curbside recycling, based on a survey conducted by Accountability Lethbridge prior to the last election.

SAGE would like to commend the efforts of the Waste & Recycling Department for better positioning Lethbridge as it transitions towards greater environmental sustainability in the future, as directed in the Municipal Development Plan / Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (MDP/ICSP).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Braum Barber".



A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

January 26, 2016

To: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister of Canada

Cc: The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Linda Duncan, M.P., House of Commons
Rachael Harder, M.P., House of Commons
The Honourable Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks,
Government of Alberta

From: Braum Barber, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment

Dear Prime Minister,

The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) is a non-profit, volunteer organization that advocates and advances environmental issues on behalf of our region. SAGE **supports** the private member's bill, Bill C-202, to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights.

A federal Environmental Bill of Rights would strengthen Canada's legal framework for protecting the environment and ensuring the rights of Canadians to a healthy environment. We believe it is time that Canada join the more than one hundred other countries in the world that have included environmental rights in their national constitution.

We fully support the principles of safeguarding the right of present and future generations of Canadians to a healthy environment, and to confirm the public trust in the Government of Canada as it relates to public stewardship and environmental law. We also support the more tangible proposal to ensure that Canadians have access to adequate environmental information and mechanisms for participating in environmental policymaking processes. Canadians should have the right to be informed on environmental issues, and have adequate legal protection against private or public reprisals for advocating for a healthy environment.

We understand that the Environmental Bill of Rights would relate only to issues that fall under federal jurisdiction, however, a strong statement from the federal government may encourage provinces that have not yet drafted similar legislation. A federal Environmental Bill of Rights would also stand as an interim step towards an explicit and more authoritative Charter right for Canadians to live in a healthy environment.

Reply (January 26, 2016)

Thanks very much for your support for my Environmental Bill of rights. It means a great deal to me. A strong motive for tabling this bill is my recognition from first hand experience of the need to strengthen the rights and opportunities so that Canadian communities will be given a clear voice in decisions and projects that may impact them. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in the future to discuss needed legal reforms.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Trudeau".

P.S. No reply to date from the Prime Minister of Canada.

Again, thanks,
Linda Duncan M.P.



A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9
info@sage-environment.org

January 29, 2016

To: Lethbridge City Council
From: Braum Barber, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment
Re: Curbside Recycling

The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) is a non-profit, volunteer organization that advocates for constructive solutions to environmental issues on behalf of our region. SAGE has a long history of collaborating with government institutions to develop positive policies and promote initiatives that preserve ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, and that help create a culture of sustainability. With respect to the Council decision not to support curbside recycling in Lethbridge on Monday, January 25, we would appreciate some guidance to the following questions. Your perspectives would help SAGE better align its efforts towards a common goal of maintaining and enhancing the health of the environment upon which our community relies.

1. In May 2015, Lethbridge City Council approved an environmental policy to 'inspire, lead, and support actions to conserve, protect and enhance the environment for the Lethbridge community' and to 'support efforts to minimize Lethbridge's ecological footprint by using natural resources efficiently'. In July 2015, Lethbridge City Council approved waste reduction targets of 180 kg per capita by 2021 for residential waste (from the current 330 kg per capita). On November 30, 2015 a proposed Residential Waste Diversion Strategy was presented to City Council that considered consultant recommendations regarding a materials recovery facility and a private vs public comparison for curbside collection operations.

Having defeated the proposed Residential Waste Diversion Strategy, what alternative will City Council propose that would more effectively replace this strategy, demonstrate environmental leadership, and better support the efficient use of natural resources in the city?

2. We were interested in the enthusiasm in City Council for the 'opt-out' strategy as it relates to the provision of city services.

What successful examples are there of citizens being allowed to opt out of paying for the provision of city-wide services that benefit all citizens?

3. Two members of the standing Environment Committee of Council (Councillors Iwaskiw and Mauro) voted against the motion before City Council on January 25 to endorse the Residential Waste Diversion Strategy. The desired outcomes of this committee are to 'ensure that Lethbridge is a leader in environmental stewardship' and to 'encourage the community to contain and reduce our impact on the environment'. A key action for the committee in 2016 was to explore curbside recycling.

It is our understanding that the role of this committee is to guide policy development for leadership in environmental stewardship, and to review research and information that City Council requires to make informed decisions. Given that is the case, why were there so many questions to administration requesting information on the day of decision? More importantly, why were two members of this committee not seemingly engaged in making this plan work, essentially overturning the Finance Committee's decision to support in principle the delivery of curbside recycling in Lethbridge (November 2014). If there were concerns with proceeding with the strategy, why did the Environment Committee not provide options for a viable strategy to achieve the policy targets for residential waste diversion?

We look forward to your insights regarding this process, its failure, and how SAGE might continue to be of service in creating a culture of sustainability in Lethbridge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Iwaskiw', written in a cursive style.

403-320-3487