



**“Hope engenders political vocabularies.
Hopelessness leads to wordlessness.”**

John Berger

March 2015

Lethbridge Trashes Idea for Curbside Recycling

No formal meeting for SAGE in March.

Kinsmen Community Gardens, March 12 at 7 p.m. Fish & Game Hut

SAGE Membership Dues are being gratefully accepted.

With a 6-3 vote against, Lethbridge City Council decides to leave recycling waste to the whim of individuals.

Mayor Spearman questioned the recommendation from City Administration based on the cost of a curbside recycling system and materials

recovery facility relative to the environmental benefit.

Concerns over the ratio of municipal waste to total waste (about 25%), the low value of recycled materials as a commodity, and the low impact on extending the life of the current landfill were expressed during the discussion of the Finance Committee.

Mayor Spearman said that he would support a collection program for compostable materials. City research suggests that roughly half of the municipal solid waste is compostable (food, grass clipping, leaves, etc.). A compostable collection would also have a positive

impact on the environment as it would directly reduce methane emissions from the landfill (the largest source for greenhouse gas emissions in Lethbridge), as well as leachate production. Leachate is the toxic stew of liquids that collect at the bottom of the landfill and could potentially leak into groundwater.

Furthermore, compost does not have to be shipped long distances to markets (as does most of the recycled materials diverted from the landfill), and it closes the nutrient cycle from field to city and back to the field.

Mayor Spearman concludes: “In short, our residents would benefit from lower costs, a better return on their money, a higher rate of waste diversion and a more positive impact on our environment by implementing Green Cart program instead of Blue Cart .”

For more from the Mayor, See his [monthly newsletter](#).

Public education on the benefits of reducing, recycling and composting continues to be important in our efforts to reduce our impact on the environment.



McKillop Church: 2015 LENTEN SERIES

The Justice, Peace & Social Action Committee OF McKillop United Church presents:

March 5 – “The Furnace in the Sky – Solar Power” – experienced, committed environmentalists Hennig Muendel & Bev Muendel-Atherstone, share their story of how they have gradually reduced their carbon footprint.

March 12 – “Water – the Precious Flow” – Permaculture designers, Lorinda Peel and/or Tim Wickstrom from Edible Earthscapes.

March 19 – “Earth - Climate Change: Do the Math” – James Byrne, Prof. & Chair of the Geography Dept., University of Lethbridge, Expert witness on water and climate change.

March 26 – “The Wind Beneath Our Wings – The Power of One” – A Celebration of Change – all present will share our environmental growth and ideas on how to increase our “green actions”.

Geothermal Energy

(Information Letter sent to SAGE, February 10th, 2015)

Dear Southern Alberta Group for the Environment,

If Alberta were a country, it would have the highest per capita GHG emissions in the world. While the province's oil sands are often cited as key cause of this, the province's reliance upon fossil fuels for base load power generation is also a significant contributor.

The province is currently mandated to phase out coal over the next 50 years. This is problematic. Besides GHG emissions, coal power is estimated to result in over \$300 million in healthcare costs annually. The current practice is for power derived from natural gas to replace existing coal generating stations.

Considering this, natural gas is no substitute for geothermal power. Studies have shown that the environmental footprint of natural gas may be worse than coal when methane leaks from shale gas and fugitive emissions from pipelines are consid-

ered. Moreover, power production from natural gas contributes to ground level ozone and emits dangerous particulates that are a threat to the health and well being of Albertans.

A renewable energy portfolio could solve all of these problems. A recent article in the [Calgary Herald](#) written by the province's renewable energy leaders, demonstrates the viability of such a portfolio. However, intermittent renewable energy sources must be backed up by base load power, in order to firm the grid. Clean geothermal power is uniquely positioned to do this. CanGEA's [Alberta Geothermal Favourability Maps and Resource Estimates](#) demonstrate the considerable geothermal resources available to the province. They could also be used to retrofit existing thermal plants, especially in the Edmonton region where accessible geothermal resources are located.

Attached is a Backgrounder for the report I authored, titled: [Un-Natural Gas: Alberta's Dirty Substitute for](#)

[Geothermal Power](#). Aside from clean base load power, geothermal energy uses many of the services required by the oil and gas sectors, which can provide economic stimulus to sectors that are being negatively effected by falling oil prices. The various entrepreneurial opportunities created by accessible low-cost geothermal heat can also benefit the province. Finally geothermal energy development provides more permanent and semi-permanent jobs than natural gas, or nearly any other energy source. It is also cost-competitive, which is demonstrated by recent research.

Though the recently released Alberta Energy Potential Metrics Study (EPMS) confirms the vast geothermal energy resources available to Alberta, our report questions a number of the EPMS conclusions. These specific concerns have been, and continue to be, discussed with the Alberta Department of Energy's EPMS team.

We encourage you to review the full [report](#).

Interesting Links:

Brad Stelfox, The Energy of Land Use video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upjwsf2FnG0>

Alberta Municipal Government Act review <http://mgareview.alberta.ca/>

Interview with Jessica Ernst <http://www.ernstversusencana.ca/>

Lethbridge River Valley video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OPIIP9XFQ>



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

Request from Boundary Creek Landowners Group

Dear Sir or Madam

Please find attached information regarding a new development application for the proposed Police Lake Ranch and Retreat adjacent to Police Lake Provincial Park and the Outpost Wetlands Natural Area. Although the Notice is dated February 9th, it was obviously not mailed out to the adjacent landowners on that date as we did not receive it until Tuesday of this week.

As you are aware from my previous e-mails, the Boundary Creek Landowners Group has decided to appeal Cardston County Council's decision to rezone the property, on which the Police Lake Ranch and Retreat would be located, from Agriculture to Rural Recreation; this rezoning would be necessary for the development to proceed. Our Appeal was filed on September 26, 2014; it will take 6-12 months before our case is heard in the Court of Appeal in Calgary, and could take a further 6-12 months for a decision to be reached. Should we win this Appeal, the developer would be forced to do an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and the Council's decision to approve the rezoning application would be overturned.

Our Appeal can not stop the developer from applying for, and getting, a development permit to proceed with his proposal. However, should we win the Appeal, he would be forced to stop work on the project until the court-ordered assessments (such as an EIA) were completed. Depending upon the outcome of

the EIA and other possible assessments, the developer may be forced to remove any construction / repair any damage done to date.

While the previous rezoning application and this new development application are obviously related to each other, the development application is considered to be a new file / new event and, as such, any letters or comments of concern sent or made regarding the previous rezoning application will not be considered by Council when rendering a decision on the new development application. For this reason, **we are asking that your organization / department consider sending another letter to Cardston County Council expressing your concerns regarding this proposed development.**

[SAGE submitted the letter, attached, on February 20th]

Should you wish to comment in person on this development application, if time permits, oral arguments may be heard at the Municipal Planning Commission meeting at the Cardston County office on Monday, February 23rd at 9:00 AM.

Thank you, in advance, for any support your organization / department is able to give the Boundary Creek Landowners Group.

Jackie Morris 403-653-2916

Follow Up Letter

At this morning's MPC meeting in Cardston, the development application for the Police Lake Ranch and Retreat was defeated by a vote of 4:3. This is great news for the environment, the wildlife, and the Boundary Creek landowners.

There was quite a bit of discussion amongst the councillors regarding the need for more information on issues such as grade, erosion, and storm water management; a detailed site plan showing the location of the RV lots and lanes, and access; an Area Structure Plan; and an EIA was even mentioned.

At the end of the discussion, the developer was given the opportunity to withdraw his application and obtain the additional information some of the councillors were asking for, or to proceed with his application; he elected to proceed with the application.

In the end, a motion was put forth by Councillor Broyce Jacobs to approve the development without an Area Structure Plan. The motion was defeated by a vote of 4:3. The councillors who voted against the development application were Fred Lacey, Lloyd Kearn, Mike Loose, and Roger Houghton. Broyce Jacobs, Jim Bester, and Duncan Thompson voted in favour of the application.

The developer has 14 days to file an appeal through the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. If an appeal is not filed, the developer has to wait at least 6 months before he can reapply.

The Collapse of Western Civilization (2014)

Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway are science historians who have written effectively about the complexities of science and politics. Oreskes received a lot of attention for her book, *Merchants of Doubt*, in which she traced industry efforts to obfuscate the impacts of tobacco on human health. She showed the same trend for manufacturing doubt around the science of global warming and climate change.

In this short book, a historian is writing in the year 2393 on the 300th anniversary of the Great Collapse in 2093. The narrator marvels at the ability of humankind at the time to have knowingly and willingly pursued behaviours that would lead to the demise of western civilization and near extinction of the species.

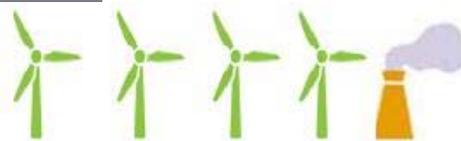
The historian of the future traces the history of the science of climate change and highlights some of the main turning points and opportunities missed from the 1970s through to the middle of the twenty-first century (some are real, and some fictional - though, even the fictional events are highly plausible). Even though the science was conclusive and alarming, 'western civilization' did nothing: "But a shadow of ignorance and denial had fallen over people who considered themselves children of the Enlightenment. It is for this reason that we now know this era as the Period of the Penumbra" (p.9).

One of the reasons for this darkness was the pretense of doubt (a topic that Oreskes tackles authoritatively in her previous research through the thousands of peer reviewed articles on the science of climate change, which showed overwhelming consensus).

Why the doubt? Oreskes & Conway share a couple of perspectives - one was the illusion of debate presented in the public forum of politics and the media.

"Newspapers often quoted think tank employees as if they were climate researchers, juxtaposing their views against those of epistemologically independent university or government scientists. This practice gave the public the impression that the science was still uncertain, thus undermining the sense that it was time to act" (p.37).

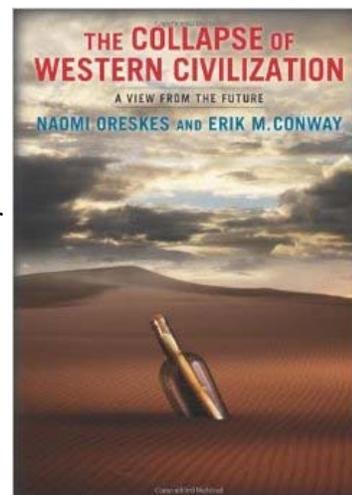
The second perspective was the complex algebra of liberty, markets, and science. In an interesting interview appended to the book, Oreskes says: "The doubt-mongers we wrote about in *Merchants of Doubt* were anti-communists who opposed environmental regulations for fear that government encroachment in the marketplace would become a backdoor to communism. They believed that political freedom was tied to economic freedom, so restrictions on economic freedom threatened political freedom. ... While rarely stated quite this baldly, the reasoning goes like this: Government intervention in the market place is bad. Accepting the reality of climate change re-



quires us to acknowledge the need for government intervention either to regulate the use of fossil fuels or to increase the cost of doing so. So we won't accept the reality of climate change" (p.69).

The irony, the authors note, is that "delaying action - increases the risk that disruptive climate change will lead to the very sort of heavy-handed interventions that conservatives wish to avoid. Catastrophic natural disasters - particularly those that disrupt food and water supply - are a justification for governments to send in the national guard, commandeer resources, declare martial law, and otherwise suspend democratic processes and interfere with markets" (p.70).

The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future offers a short synthesis of our current situation as seen from the objectivity of a future historian. Because of its brevity, it avoids long excursions of the science or the politics. It wouldn't satisfy anyone who doubts the consensus in climate science. It is a precise call to action for those who value the future as much as themselves.





**A leading voice for a healthy and
environmentally sustainable community**

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

February 20, 2015

To: Council of Cardston County
From: Braum Barber, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment
Re: Development Application No. 003.15

Please accept this letter regarding the Development Application for land located at NE 1-1-27-W4.

The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) supports the concerns expressed by the Boundary Creek landowners regarding the development of a recreational vehicle park and family reunion centre at this location.

The parcel under consideration for development is adjacent to Outpost Wetlands Natural Area to the south and Police Outpost Provincial Park to the east - both of which are key components of the provincial protected areas system for the Foothills Parkland Natural Subregion and are within an Environmentally Significant Area of national significance (<http://www.albertaparks.ca/albertaparksca/library/environmentally-significant-areas-report.aspx>). Private ranchland north of Police Outpost Provincial Park is under conservation easement to Nature Conservancy Canada because of its environmental significance. Together these properties support significant biodiversity, including foothills fescue grassland, aspen woodland, and wetland ecosystems that provide habitat for several species of conservation concern including Grizzly Bear, Black-headed Grosbeak, Leopard Frog, Western Blue Flag and Conimitella. The region is also home to the Trumpeter Swan, only recently elevated from a species-at-risk status in Alberta due to the success of the Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development *Trumpeter Swan Recovery Plan* (2013). The plan indicates this region as prime breeding grounds for the Trumpeter Swan – a unique site in the province south of

Wetaskiwin (<http://esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/species-at-risk/species-at-risk-publications-web-resources/birds/documents/SAR-TrumpeterSwan-RecoveryPlan-Mar2013.pdf>).

Maintaining current zoning would support ongoing efforts to maintain rich biodiversity and the recovery of this species.

The parcel under consideration for development is at the headwaters of Boundary Creek, a tributary of Lee Creek and source waters for the town of Cardston and other communities downstream in the Oldman watershed. Any use that leads to significant reduction in streamflow in Boundary Creek and/or contamination of surface or groundwater is disturbing. Current zoning and use of the parcel for livestock grazing is consistent with protecting and providing significant ecological goods and services – biodiversity protection, source water protection, water capture and filtering, carbon capture, livestock production on native range. Change of zoning and use may result in loss or degradation of these goods and services.

The final draft of the *South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP)* speaks to “Maintaining an agricultural land base [that] recognizes the value of agricultural land for sustainable growth as well as providing an opportunity for expansion of agricultural production and value-added agribusinesses in the region” (p.44). The document also recognizes the need to find a greater balance between economic, social and environmental aspects in decision making, with a greater emphasis on preserving biodiversity through conservation. The SSRP states that a provincial approach for the management of ecosystem services requires that “new methods and strategies must be explored and developed to encourage the provision of a broad suite of ecosystem services by private landowners” (p.66). The current zoning and stewardship of local landowners supports these provincial goals.

The nearby provincial park provides a level of recreational opportunities that is appropriate for the infrastructure available, and is properly managed by provincial regulations. The addition of 150 RV sites and 15 cabins results in a complex that is over three times as large as the camping facilities currently available at Police Outpost Provincial Park. The proposed development will greatly exacerbate traffic and stress existing infrastructure and, as already noted, the additional activity and noise will negatively impact wildlife habitat in the region. Since a private development is largely independent of provincial purview, it becomes more difficult to respond to the negative cumulative effects of development as they emerge.

If the parcel is rezoned, any approval of commercial/private recreation use would need to be sensitive to the significant “natural attributes, natural aesthetics and important scenic vistas” of the parcel as well as Outpost Wetlands Natural Area and Police Outpost Provincial Park and adjacent private property under conservation easement. Any use would need to limit or avoid compromising these attributes (refer to Schedule 2 Land Use District Regulations for Rural

Recreation - RR in Cardston County Land Use Bylaw 653-2013). Careful consideration would need to be given to the source of potable water supply (would the proposed land use require a water licence) and to wastewater management to avoid contamination of surface and groundwater.

We support the Boundary Creek Landowners Group that a detailed environmental impact assessment and an area structure plan be required for any change in land use that may impact current natural attributes of the parcel and surrounding area.

SAGE believes that cumulative effects planning is necessary to conserve the ecosystem services that are a foundation for a healthy society and robust regional economy. Such planning will require support from all levels of government in their decision making, as well as the stewardship of private landowners. The development of a RV park is not supported by the landowners in the region, it is not aligned with conservation goals of the Province of Alberta for biodiversity, and it is not an example of the greater environmental balance acknowledged in the SSRP. Negative cumulative effects on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the integrity of our headwaters suggest that high-impact developments, such as the one proposed, should be discouraged.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Braum Barber', with a stylized, cursive script.

Braum Barber
SAGE

Wildlife in the Wind Speaker Series

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP REDUCE WILDLIFE VEHICLE COLLISIONS?

Rachelle Haddock

Date: Tuesday March 3, 2015

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 pm

**Location: Lethbridge Public Library
- Theatre Room**

Cost: Free – Everyone is Welcome!



Are you concerned about wildlife vehicle collisions? Most people while driving Alberta's highways have experienced hitting an animal or know someone who has. Come and learn about efforts by citizens in the Crowsnest Pass to identify wildlife vehicle collision hotspots, reduce wildlife vehicle collisions and improve the safe passage for wildlife across highways. The Miistakis Institute has developed citizen science projects, Road Watch in the Pass and Collision Count, designed to inform safe passage of wildlife across highways. Road Watch in the Pass is a long-standing citizen science program with over 5,000 citizen observations that have helped to inform the location of wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots. Collision Count is a new citizen science project where volunteers report road kill observations using a smart phone app at identified transportation mitigation sites. Together with other partners, citizen scientists have helped transportation planners better understand why, where and how to ensure safe passage for wildlife.

Rachelle Haddock is a project manager with the Miistakis Institute, a non-profit charitable research institute affiliated with Mount Royal University in Calgary. Rachelle completed her undergraduate studies at UBC in forestry and her graduate work at the University of Calgary in environmental science. She has been working in the non-profit environmental sector in Western Canada and the US for over a decade. Her work at Miistakis is focused on road ecology, citizen science, recreation access management and communications. Rachelle also serves as vice-chair of the board for Water Matters.

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